■ SPORTS
Fil-Am wins singles, doubles in ITF tourney

■ ACROSS/A17
Controversial ex-policeman shot dead in Bulacan

■ BUSINESS
Engineered eggplants to enter Philippine market

■ ENTERTAINMENT
Angel bids goodbye to Darna

GMA treats grandkids to trip to Disneyland

AFTER ROBINSONS WITH LEADERS FROM the Pacific Rim, President Macapagal-Arroyo treated her grandchildren to a weekend with Mickey Mouse and the Lion King.

Ms Arroyo stepped out Hong Kong Disneyland on Sunday for a private visit with her family en route home from the annual

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

P100 bill with GMA's name misspelled still good–BSP

By Doris C. Dumlao
Business

IF YOU'RE HOLDING A crisp P100 bill with President Macapagal-Arroyo's name misspelled as "Arroo," sound yourself as

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HOLDING puppies, Philippines First Lady Arroyo, her husband Mike and one of their grandchildren watch a parade in Hong Kong's Disneyland after she attended the Apec meet in South Korea.

NPA rebs use land mines, kill 9 soldiers

AFP slams Geneva pact violation

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Phil Utopian Bureau
and Dona Pazzibugan
in Manila

ILOILO CITY—IN their bloodiest attack in a year, communist rebels using land mines blew up an Army truck and then raked it with gunfire, killing at least nine soldiers and wounding 20 others, the military said yesterday.

The Armed Forces condemned what it said was the growing use by the New People's Army (NPA) of a weapon banned by the Geneva Conventions on use.

The impact of the blast lifted the truck off the ground, throwing off many soldiers, and caused it to turn around so that its front faced the opposite direction when it landed, a local radio station said.

The attack occurred Saturday morning in Calinog town in Iloilo fairly far on Sunday in Quezon province, another NPA unit shot dead a policeman due to arrive next year and wounded three others in a battle that shattered the slowdown of nearly 6 months, police said.

Communist spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal said the series of simultaneous guerrilla tactical offensives in different parts of the country "serve the commemorations of the 36th to the intended destruction of the Macapagal-Arroyo regime."

"More bigger attacks will be launched by our local guerrillas in the coming days. They are already in position," he said.

A POLICEMAN carefully handles two improvised land mines found in a cargo truck following an ambush by communist rebels in Tinang town in Quezon.

Olongapo folk view rape case with mixed feelings

By Tonette Orejas
PEI Central Luzon Desk

OLONGAPO CITY—A WOMAN WHO WAS abused twice by American sailors says Olongapo is not a kind venue for the 22-year-old Filipina woman seeking justice after allegedly being gang-raped by six US Marines.

The 46-year-old woman said city residents could neither wholly offer sympathy nor objectively relate to the Nov. 1 rape incident in the Subic Bay Freeport at the conclusion of the Fil-US counterterrorism exercises.

"People have [conflicting] thoughts on the case," said Minda, not her real name.

"Surely, there would be sympathies for the woman because she's a Filipina, but you can't expect all of them to give her moral support because many [especially] on the base for a long time for a long, long time," she told the Inquirer in an interview at her house in a slum area in Barretto here.

The preliminary investigation of the case

Sex rap filed vs Neda official

By Helen E. Flores

AN ALLEGED ROMEO AT THE NATIONAL Economic and Development Authority (Neda) is in hot water for sending text jokes to and making unwanted advances on a subordinate.

The Office of the Ombudsman has filed with the Sandiganbayan sexual harassment charges against Jose Romeo Escandor, a Neda regional director in Cebu City.

Escandor was indicted on Nov. 14 following a complaint filed by Ruth Cruz, a Neda chief economic development specialist in Cebu.

Records showed that Escandor was "maliciously touching her hand, telling her he missed her and wanted to have sexual relations with her, sending her sex jokes with graphic pictures through her e-mail and sending her 5000 [text] messages with suggestive remarks," the Office of the Ombudsman said.

It said such acts resulted in an "intimidating,

Teach here first, DepEd urges migrating teachers

By Alcuin Papa

TEACH YOUR OWN FIRST BEFORE teaching others.

This was the challenge issued by the Department of Education (DepEd) to Filipino teachers who are thinking of migrating to the United States.

Education Undersecretary Fe Hidalgo told reporters recently that teachers—particularly those who had undergone training and were awards—should first serve there was a "transfer of knowledge" to local students before they began to think about leaving the country.

Hidalgo made the plea in the wake of reports that the United States had started recruiting local teachers to fill an annual US requirement of 200,000 new teachers, threatening to exacerbate the worsening "brain drain" in the Philippines.

She said suggestions that a mandatory period be imposed on teachers to render service in public schools around the country before they were abroad was a good idea to arrest the "brain drain."

Hidalgo said such a mandatory imposition on teachers would be similar to the existing requirement for local nurses who are required to practice their professions in the country first before going abroad.

However, she admitted that to the

BEST ENVIRONMENTAL GRASS-ROOTS PROJECT

Pinoy's coconet tops BBC World Challenge

By Michael B. Juanico
PEI Southern Luzon Bureau

LEGAZPI CITY—AGRICULTURAL engineer Justino Arboleda of the Philippines won the first prize in the First World Challenge contest sponsored by BBC World television in London on Nov. 17 for his coconet material entered set at no. 1065.

Coconet, made from waste coconut husk, was adjudged the best environmental grass-roots project in the world. It was among 456 entries from 90 countries.

Malta, which introduced a biodiesel product, took the second prize, while Tanzania was in third place for its fuel-efficient stove.

From 12 finalists, the field was cut down to three.

Fifty percent of each score was given by the judges and the other 50 percent by votes cast on the Internet, according to Arboleda's wife Julie. Thus, anyone could not give the exact number of the Internet votes but found he ranked.

Arboleda, who is still in London, told the Inquirer in a text message that he received the award at 7 p.m. (London time) on Nov. 17, (2 a.m. on Nov. 18 in the Philippines). He also received a cash prize of $20,000.

The winners will be featured by the BBC in a special program on Dec. 2 and 4 and by Newsweek magazine in its Dec. 5 issue, according to the agricultural engineer.

Arboleda said winning first prize was a great honor for the country.

"With the world recognition, it would be very easy for us to promote our coconut products throughout the world," he said.

He expressed confidence that the coconet demand for coconut would help alleviate poverty in the country because more jobs would be created. He said demand for coconut materials would also benefit thousands of poor Filipino coconut farmers.

Coconet is manufactured by Zubokan Enterprise, which Arboleda owns.

His coconut husk business was honored by the Inquirer in January. It has provided jobs for at least 1,000 families in Bicol and other parts of the country.

About 600 families have benefited from the coconet in Albay and 400 in Sorsogon, 150 in Aklan and 300 in Southern Leyte.

FILIPINO agricultural engineer Justino Arboleda shows off a sprout of his prize-winning coconet, made from coconut husk waste.

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Pols, traders blamed for eco problems

By Blandie S. Rivera

POLITICIANS AND BUSINESSMEN, ALLEGEDLY behind the poaching, overfishing and logging, are among the root causes of the Philippines' environmental problems, an officer of the European Commission in the Philippines said.

The European Commission, the biggest donor of grants for environmental projects in the country, expressed disappointment at the slow turnaround of the Philippines' degraded resources even after 30 years of aid.

An evaluation of the "very many of environmental problems and why [the Philippines] has not been that successful after 30 years of assistance" found that politicians and businessmen were among the three main culprits, EC program officer Jane Echeverri said in his presentation during the arboretum workshop sponsored by the Biodiversity Society of the Imperial Palace Suites Thursday night.

"Politicians and businessmen are often behind the poaching, overfishing and logging," he said.

It came to point that the logging concession recently granted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to a firm owned by Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, a hardcore anti-logging activist working with Church and environmental groups.

Environment Secretary Michael T. Defensor allowed Enrile's Jose Jose Timber Corp. to cut down in a 91,770-ha area covered by the Sierra Madre forest ecosystem. The ecosystem's logging area falls within the 359,000-hectare core of the Sierra Madre Protected Area.

Pulling the plug

Senators said Global Environment Facility, a major donor of the $12.8-million Sierra Madre Biodiversity Project, was inclined to pull the plug on the next phase of the project if logging resumes.

"It's quite unfortunate that the Philippines is currently on one of the donor community because there's still a lot to be done in terms of governance and transparency," Echeverri said.

Pat EC, manager of the Environment Division 23 member-states, has poured in at least 76 million euros in some 264.3 billion pesos the Philippines for conservation projects, research and training, and rural and urban ecosystem management in the last decade.

Some projects were either related, is or partially funded by the EC over the years as part of its poverty-reduction efforts. In some cases, the Philippines served as the host and secretariat for EC-funded projects for Southeast Asian nations.

Migration and population

Echeverri named two other reasons for the low impact and unsustainability of environmental projects in the Philippines: Migration and population pressure and trade and loans practices.

Migration led to the introduction of the same inappropriate practices in the countryside, while trade and loan's conditioned to dismantle the safeguards of the country for trade.

In a review of the environmental projects in the Philippines, the EC pointed down much of the problems to institutions such as the DENR, the lead agency to dialogue of environmental protection.

Conflict of interest

The review team consistently found that the DENR had a "very poor" reputation among local governments and other departments in terms of policy development and implementation, law enforcement, data collection and provision of environmental services.

The experts also noted in the review that of the many of the legal mandates of the DENR, which is in charge of the conservation of natural resources and the granting of logging and mining concessions.

"This has helped divide the institution into two factions, one influenced by vested government policies that actively promote mining and/or logging, such as the President's 10-point plan," the EC environmental's executive summary said.

While the team found that EC projects in the Philippines were effective, it said the projects had produced little long-term impact and attitude changes in the involved government.

"The overall conclusion was that sustainability remains a central problem because, although there are mechanisms in place to facilitate the flow of information to decision makers ... they have not been able to convert the logjam into a flood with policy decisions and action use the very funds are allocated," the EC review team said.

The review was done in March by an international and one local expert commissioned by the EC. The findings were presented to Defensor, DENR officials and representatives of the EC member-states in April.

GMA meets with world leaders

By Christine O. Avendaño

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO is meeting on the side with eight world leaders in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in Busan, South Korea, yielded commitments of support for Philippine programs and terms a request from Russia for Manila's support for its bid to join the World Trade Organization.

In his View from the Palace column, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said Arroyo did not only meet with US President George W. Bush but also held talks with South Korea President and Japan summit from Koizumi Junichiro, Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, Indonesian Prime Minister Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Japanese Prime Minister Jonathan Rodriguez and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In his Arroyo's meeting with Bush, the US president expressed concern about the situation in Barisan Mindanao, Bunye said.

"President Arroyo agreed to support efforts in the United Nations, particularly in the Security Council, where the Philippines is currently a nonpermanent member, to help in the peace efforts in Myanmar," Bunye said.

The two leaders also talked about their mutual concerns on security. Bush, according to Bunye, was satisfied "with the strength of the intelligence exchange between the Philippines and the US, the capture of Abu Sayyaf camps and the recent conviction of the Ultimate's Kay Bombers."

President Arroyo told "Seattle is changed" to Bush, who is expected to visit Manila next month.

Bunye said Bush would sign for economic and investment agreements during his visit here.

Philippine's Rafael Bunye said, "Overall we continue his country's support for the Philippine peace process as the third party facilitator and head of the international monitoring team."

Bunye said that Brunei also continued continued support to Manila as a member of the international monitoring team. Sultan Bolkiah also told Mr. Arroyo that his country would support efforts to build moderation in Mindanao.

Indonesia's Yudhoyono expressed support for Manila's peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, according to Bunye. Yudhoyono also told Mr. Arroyo that Indonesia would continue to be a partner in the Philippines' Centre both dialogue initiatives.

President Arroyo and Singapore's prime minister explored ways to expand the two countries' cooperation opportunities. Lee also pledged that his country would work closely with Manila in promoting the rights, welfare and safety of Filipinos working in the city-state.

SOUNDING THE CALL VS TERROR

Spain's Defense Minister José Bono (right) and co-sponsor and host of the Iber-American Club in Buenos Aires, Manila, where the board of the organization met yesterday. Bono is in town to discuss antiterror measures with President Arroyo and other government officials. (STORY ON PAGE A3)

GMA proposes ₱2.5-B outlay to fight bird flu

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO HAS proposed a P2.5-billion war chest to strengthen the country's defenses against the bird flu virus, the Department of Agriculture said yesterday.

It said the money appeal to address the amount to support the bird flu protection program under Agriculture Secretary and newly-installed Bird Flu Czar Domingo F. Panganiban.

In Seoul-based Asia, the Philippines is one of three countries, along with Singapore and Brunei, that remains free of bird flu.

Panganiban said the special budget would be submitted on both houses of Congress and the Department of Budget and Management for approval on an addendum to the 2003 national outlay of P1.057 billion for the national budget.

"The budget will be used to upgrade and expand laboratory facilities to detect the bird flu virus. The country already has available 13 laboratory facilities in different regional municipals, but we need to expand them as we are monitoring 40 areas, including places most frequently visited by migratory birds," Panganiban said.

"The aim of the crisis, to prevent the spread of the virus, medicines for the immunization of animals or affected areas should be ready at all times as a preventive quick response," he said.

More medicines should be made available to the farmers and the Department of Health to protect humans from the deadly virus in case it mutates and transfers to human beings, Panganiban said.

Mr. Arroyo was in Busan, South Korea, last week to discuss the threat of a bird flu pandemic with other leaders in the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) forum.

She spoke on how the country's protection strategy was working against the avian influenza, and offered the Philippines as a model in the fight against bird flu.

Staid Bunye shows why he's no Frank Sinatra

By Christian V. Esguerra

BUSAN, SOUTH KOREA (NOV. 11, 11:27—AM) Blue eyes is back.

And he goes by the name of Ignacio Bunye, press secretary for not-a-crooner, who swooned at members of Philippine media during a break in the now-concluded Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) summit here.

Bunye dropped his usually deliberate voice, crooning a Frank Sinatra classic "It's Impossible" as the Bagio" with Ginger Reyes-de, Malacañang Mass Media Group head, co-backing singer.

Bunye sang out for close to half the song, the presence of Mijia, a popular Jun Bunye, ed by others and foreigners in this city's harbor district on Friday.

His song finished, he segued into another famous classic and karaoke favorite, "My Way" delighting the already enthusiastic media people, including those from MSG-DWI, Lately the target of criticism of Malacañang.

"This is the first time I've seen him like this. Usually he's very uptight," one reporter said of Bunye.

Candidos (Pampanga) Mayor Jerry Selaya, who came with the President's party, suggested that Bunye hold regular "bonding" sessions with reporters.

"I think it is important for public officials to establish rapport with media," he told the bayanan.

But at 10:30 p.m., it was bedtime for Mr. Bunye.

The President also was staying at the seaside Paradise Hotel instead her spokesperson to fight off jet lag. Before calling it a night, however, the last duty of the Apec summit. Ms. Arroyo was set to address fellow economic leaders on human security issues such as economic recession and bird flu.

The following day, the old Bunye was back. He made media history a year ago by delivering important news about the president's coming to the President. It was only after much persuasion from the media that he acceded to a brief interview.

Bunye left the cold, dense city of Incheon, where Mrs. Arroyo and her daughter Luli on Saturday afternoon. Together with some members of the Philippine delegation, they flew to Hong Kong where the President was scheduled to meet with Filipino businessmen and workers.

The President was scheduled to be back in Manila today.

UNAUTHORIZED DUPLICATION IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN
SUBJECTED BY APPLICABLE LAW

House, Senate Cha-cha battle looms

THE HOUSE OF REPresentatives will force the vote this week on a resolution seeking to convene Congress into a constituent assembly to amend the 1987 Constitution and shift the country to a parliamentary system of government, Senate sources said yesterday.

The sources said the House leadership would set the vote on Charter change ahead of the plenary vote on the 2006 national budget.

"The House will take a plenary vote on Cha-cha before it enacts the 2006 General Appropriations Act because a near complete [attendance] is needed for a Cha-cha vote which cannot be mustered unless the vote is taken close to the budget vote where almost everyone is present," a Senate official privy to the House schedule said.

Needed votes

Sen. Joker Arroyo believes the House can muster the three-fourths vote, or 177 congressmen, needed to approve the Cha-cha initiative being pushed by Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. and former President Fidel V. Ramos and endorsed by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"Measured against the 150 congressmen who voted against impeachment, 177 votes is entirely possible because even the 50-plus congressmen who voted for impeachment this time will join the Cha-cha vote," Arroyo said.

By approving the Cha-cha resolution, the sources said, the House will be forcing the Senate to decide if it would go along with the House or kill the initiative.

Aware of the Senate opposition to Cha-cha, House leaders had said that if the Senate did not agree to Cha-cha, the House would go it alone.

Options

Once approved, the House will transmit its resolution to the Senate where it will go to the committee on constitutional amendments chaired by Sen. Richard Gordon.

Arroyo said the Senate committee had four options.

It could recommend concurrence or nonconcurrence, which would practically kill the initiative, or file its own resolution which, if adopted by the plenary, would bring about a Senate-House bicameral conference committee. Or it could sit on the measure and let it die a natural death.

If the Senate plenary takes a vote, three-fourths or 18 senators would be needed to approve the resolution. With 23 senators, it would take only six of them to kill the initiative.

"As matters stand now, it is so easy to collect the six senators to vote against Cha-cha," Arroyo said. ***Juliet Labog-Javellana***

Teach here first, DepEd urges migrating teachers

Front page ▶

absence of any enrollment rule to this effect, the DepEd could not prevent teachers from leaving the country in search of "greener pastures."

During the last three-day Education Congress in Baron City, Education Assistant Secretary Cecilio Montero told reporters that teachers were committed enough to teach despite the low salaries.

Problem of incentives

But another factor that could add to the teachers' desire to leave the country is the lack of career advancement because of incentives, he said.

Montero also said that the present salaries of Filipino teachers were only a fraction of what other countries paid their teachers.

"Here teachers receive only P7,000 to P8,000 as salaries but they are paid five or six times higher when they go to work in Singapore or in the United States," Montero said.

"Definitely, you can't compete with those kinds of incentives."

Supply and demand

But he said the education department was not alarmed by the brain drain since the supply of teachers in the country could still meet the demand.

"It's really more of a challenge for us to be able to increase the competitiveness against the lure of money," he said.

"It's also hard to fill in a foreign country so we are not keep on the socioeconomic benefits for the teachers," Montero said.

The problem, Montero said, is the quality of teachers.

As a solution, the DepEd is starting to conduct a series of trainings for teachers to sharpen their skills in the three core subjects: English, Math and Science.

Pinoy's coconet tops BBC Challenge

Front page ▶

Arboleda has also developed other uses for the different waste products generated by his coconut farm. These include dried roots, stuffing for car seats and mattresses, and fertilizer (made from coconut dust).

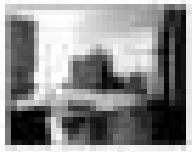
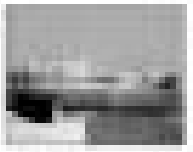
Before Arboleda bagged first prize in the BBC World Challenge, he was cited for excellence in export by President Macapagal-Arroyo on Dec. 12 last year during the Golden Shell Award held in Metro Manila.

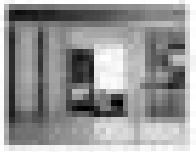
Arboleda's wife said she was very proud of her husband and would like to thank the Filipinos for voting for him.

She said a star report Eumenio, who told her that she had read the inspiring story about Arboleda and his coconut project, after nominating the concept project to the BBC World Challenge.

Arboleda was expected to arrive in Manila last night, Alfie said.

THE FILIPINO inventor receives his award during the BBC-sponsored ceremony in London.



Karbell

CENTURION

NPA rebels use land mines, kill 9 soldiers

From page A1

Maj. Ramoncito Ramos, Army spokesperson, said the rebels "have been using land mines for a long time now, but lately there's a high number because they're really practicing engineering."

"The recent attack by members of the communist NPA using land mines indicates a shift in their usual modus operandi of ambush operations and is a clear manifestation of their terroristic nature," Ramos said.

Signatory to convention

The spokesperson of the Red-tagged Army 3rd Infantry Division denounced the attack.

"The use of land mines is no longer authorized under United Nations laws," Maj. Lyndon Soliveres said.

The Philippines is a signatory to the Geneva Convention which bans indiscriminate land mines. The NPA has refused to sign any agreement on the banning of land mines on the grounds that this would leave the island free for the government, a lawyer for an international group campaigning for their ban, but told the Inquirer.

The military said the NPA also used land mines in an Oct. 8 ambush in Mitomio Overlook, in which five soldiers and three civilians were killed. Two soldiers were wounded by a rebel-planted land mine in Sultan Kudarat in May last year.

Scout Rangers

The losses in Bukidnon followed by far the highest in a single incident suffered by government forces in a year. Also in November last year, NPA rebels killed 13 soldiers in Surigao del Sur.

The casualties in the Bukidnon ambush included troops of the elite Army Scout Rangers battalion under Lt. Col. Noel Buan, who was hand-picked for 18 months by the NPA until his unit is relieved in April 2006.

The casualties were also the biggest suffered by soldiers in a rebel attack in the Visayas in the last two years, the Army's Central Command said.

Soliveres said the soldiers were on foot from returning from combat operations when attacked at around 3 p.m. in Barangay Mabilingan, 7 km from the Calbiga town proper.

As the shots rang out, around 50 soldiers rushed down from eight army trucks, the rebels detonated two mines that hit the first vehicle, an ill truck. Then the rebels, numbering 30 to 40, opened fire.

Howling fight

Soldiers in the second vehicle, an M-35 military truck, fired back, triggering a howling fight.

"They were also able to deliver a heavy volume of fire toward the enemy," Soliveres said. "We believe they (rebels) also suffered casualties."

All of the casualties were on board the ill truck.

The military said the truck was a road wreck and that the casualties were victims of the blasts.

The explosives ripped two craters in the ground, one meters wide and a meter deep.

Soliveres said the dead rebels were "unidentified." explaining only rebels suggested, unlike the "you remember Commander?" type, which exploits rebels engaged in.

'Punish GMA'

The rebels were believed to be under the 8th NPA Jose Rizal Bidin-Leonardo A. Command.

Troops have launched a pursuit and established blocking positions on withdrawal routes.

The Communist Party of the Philippines had issued directives to NPA units nationwide to intensify attacks against government troops.

The statement posted on the CPP and NPA website (www.philippinerevolution.org) said the attacks were meant "to punish" the Arroyo administration for worsening the lives of the people through corruption.

Prime rather between Manila and the communists ground to a halt last year.

Soliveres identified the fatalities as Staff Sergeant Alexander Lato, Pfc Cyrildel Montemayor and Pfc Ian Villanueva, and Private First Class Rowelson Bo-ol, all of the 47th Infantry Battalion.

The others were Sgt. Rommel Pasero, Cpl. Mario Peñaco and Privates First Class James William Ocaya, Richard Bailon, Joel Bryan Belocura, Nicanor Abellon Bisilan, Ernesto Tomas, Edwin Gerona, Alfredo Caballido, Raymund Lim, Christian Nevarra and Ronny Bawicalan.

Also wounded were Corporals Mario Decena, Ronnie Bulatao, Dexter Bongcaya and Joel Ochotorena and Pfc Gil Cadilla.

Chief Insp. Nonnie Rivera, Tiwing police chief, identified the security in the hacked truck as PO3 Charlie Bas. The encounter occurred in a village along Maharlika Highway in Tiwing.

Wounded were SPO1 Liberato Garcia, PO3 Jaime Bonilo and PO1 Ronel Lumadrid.

Of the six army mobile patrol vans, only PO3 Bartee Bulalan and PO3 Ryan Antonio were unhurt in the gunfight.

Rebels wounded

Police said no casualties were reported on the side of the NPA, but blood stains were found in a van and a carnapped truck used by the rebels.

Reed said that many NPA guerrillas had also been wounded.

Reed said the police had received information that a group of armed men in fatigue uniforms aboard a Kia van had commandeered a Isuzu truck and for those dispatched a mobile patrol to search for the men.

The police spotted the van parked along the highway at around 7 a.m. A six-patrol search was on large rubber and another two open-cargo trucks.

When the policemen disembarked from their vehicle, the rebels opened fire, killing five soldiers.

Driver's story

Mariboy Gordon, driver of the Isuzu that had been fully loaded with cops, said the rebels led him to a parked cargo truck along the highway some 200 meters from the Tiwing police station.

"The truck had mechanical trouble. The NPA ordered me to tow it," he said.

After getting the truck for about a kilometer, Gordon said the rebels ordered him to stop and order the cops aboard to pulling the vehicle.

"They told me that they would get another truck. I was surprised to see a lot of armed men aboard the cargo truck that I towed. That was the time the police patrol arrived. When the shooting started, I rushed to an open

Quezon police said the NPA group that ambushed the policemen was the same group that attacked the Globe cellsite tower in Lucban and Sampaloc towers on September.

With reports from Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Nikko Sandoval, Jaime Bantoy and Bill Hayworth

GMA treats grandkids to trip to Disneyland

From page A1

two-day Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) summit in Busan, South Korea.

With grandchildren Mikaela Gloria, Ina Victoria and Eva Angelina, the President and her entourage hitched the Dumbo the Flying Elephant ride and the Jungle River Cruise.

They also watched shows like Mickey's Philharmagic, featuring 3-D version of Disney cartoon characters, and the "Festival of the Lion King," a Broadway-style musical.

She also bonded with Filipino runners in the 3:16, which opened two months ago.

Reunited

Ms Arroyo arrived in Hong Kong on Saturday evening, just hours after the Apec forum ended. She was to return home this morning, her office said. Her husband, Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, and other family members were to join her.

Last week, Ms Arroyo was reunited with her corruption-tainted husband, who had been away on voluntary exile for the past three months. He had been accused of influence-peddling and receiving illegal gambling kickbacks.

But Mike Arroyo have no charges and has denied taking gambling payoffs. The accusations are the subject of an ongoing congressional inquiry.

Hong Kong Disneyland is Walt Disney Co.'s 11th theme park. It features two resort hotels on a bay surrounded by mountains on Lantau, the territory's largest island.

Ms Arroyo managed to squeeze in some meetings with the Filipino community in Hong Kong. On Saturday she dined with members of the Philippine chamber there, and Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye.

Yesterday the President started her day by going to Mass and later meeting with representatives of the Filipino community before proceeding to Disneyland.

In the evening, she was to attend a concert at the park, featuring Filipino talents. Report from Christine O. Avendaño and AP

PRESIDENT Arroyo stands beside a taxi painted with an ad touting the Philippines in front of a Hong Kong hotel. —AP

₱100 bill with GMA's name . . .

From page A1

one of the lucky few.

The bill is legal tender and can be used for your purchases. But don't keep it as a collector's item, which may later fetch a much higher price, Bautista had said.

The banknote was misspelling the President's name it could be a first in Philippine history.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas released yesterday that it had issued a "small" number of the notes.

"The BSP has rapidly adjusted to the President's name misspelled," BSP Deputy Governor Antonio Nombre Jr. said in a statement.

High demand

Nevertheless, in accordance with policy, these 100-peso bills were the first to have been issued by BSP are considered legal tender and should be accepted as genuine currency," Jurencio said.

He said the printing of the bank notes had been outsourced abroad to ensure a sufficient supply during the Christmas season.

As ₱100 bills are highly in demand then, the BSP had had the printing of additional bills to its supplier.

The ₱10 bill also features the signature of the two of the bills with the President's name misspelled. The central bank would not say how many of the bills had been printed and released.

"We're investigating what happened," a BSP executive said.

But the BSP Governor Gabriel Singson, a career central banker who was at the helm of the central bank during the terms of Presidents Fidel V. Ramos and President Joseph Estrada, said he could not recall a similar incident.

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Students seek bigger budget for education

By Alcuin Papa

MILITANT STUDENT GROUPS HAVE DEmanded the government increase the budget for education.

In a statement sent to media yesterday, the National Union of Students of the Philippines (NUSP) said the President's new P21-billion "pork barrel" should instead be allocated for the Department of Education (DepEd).

"As the 111 state colleges and universities continually suffer from poor instruction and facilities, President Macapagal-Arroyo has just received her biggest pork barrel to date—P21 billion to keep her floundering regime afloat through carrot-stick development projects of local government units to ensure their loyalty to the discredited President," said Terry Ridon, NUSP deputy vice president for Luzon.

Ridon denounced the P21 billion fund which he said should be allocated for "poorly funded basic social services such as higher education, health and housing in next year's budget appropriations."

He added: "Ms Arroyo will have proven yet again how insecure her regime has utterly become, by appropriating P8 billion for her Kilos Asenso and Kalayaan Barangay programs; supposedly performance-based development projects for LGUs, and P13 billion for her Healing the Wounds of Edsa program, apparently to offer the hand of reconciliation to her political foes through so-called projects to benefit the poor."

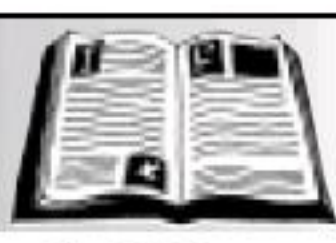
Ridon said the two funds were mere "palliatives" for Ms Arroyo's failure to address the lack of basic services like education. He said the 111 state universities and colleges (SUCs) would have to make do with a "meager" budget of P16.6 billion—P4 billion of which would go to the University of the Philippines system.

"The rest of the SUCs, which include the densely populated Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Mindanao State University and the University of Northern Philippines, will have to divide among themselves what is left of the very small budget."

Anakbayan also called for a raise in the education budget to arrest the deteriorating quality of education caused by the yearly decrease in outlay.

The DepEd is asking for P119 billion in the P1.06 trillion 2006 budget, up from last year's P112 billion.

The Daily Gospel



Monday, November 21, 2005
Presentation of Mary

1st Reading: **Zec 2:14-17**
Gospel: **Matthew 12:46-50**

While Jesus was still talking to the people, his mother and his brothers wanted to speak to him and they waited outside. So someone said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are just outside; they want to speak with you."

Jesus answered, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" Then he pointed to his disciples and said, "Look! Here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is for me brother, sister, or mother."

Commentary

Mary is presented in the Scriptures as the perfect disciple. It could be said that in today's gospel passage the perfect disciple is presented as Mary. Some have imagined that Jesus was lowering his mother to the level of the disciples; "who is my mother?" seemed to them a strange question. But surely the reverse is the case; he was raising the disciple to the level of his mother. As he hang dying on the cross he said, "Woman, this is your son" (Jn 19:26). To some, this too appeared a little distant; but it was in fact a term of respect; it was the respectful way to address one's mother. Every disciple is Mary, in a sense. You are a disciple. Jesus has the same respect for you that he has for his mother.

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Subic rape case up at DOJ budget hearing

By TJ Burgonio

AT THE BEGINNING OF BUDget hearings today senators will get another shot at questioning Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez on the case of the 22-year-old woman who was allegedly raped by an US Marine.

The Senate committee of the whole, chaired by Senate President Franklin Drilon, will tackle the proposed 2006 budget of the Department of Justice.

"It is not unusual that he might be asked about the controversial rape case involving an American serviceman," Drilon said in a statement.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said he and his colleagues were inclined to fire Chief Superintendent Gonzalez on the case, especially if the suspects were still in the country.

"We want to find out what's the status of the investigation, which government has custody of the six suspects, and whether the suspects are still in the country or not," he said in an interview.

Gonzalez appointed a low Team Usa's lowering of the Legislative Oversight Committee on the Visiting Forces Agreement to the Senate, where he was asked to explain why the Marines were turned over immediately to the US authorities.

An administrative complaint, which asked not to be named, however, said he was no reason to pull Gonzalez on the rape case, saying "I don't find fault in his position."

He said Gonzalez, accused Gonzalez, Columbia, deputy administrator of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, and foreign affairs officials did not deserve the criticism heaped on them for their apparent slowness to take custody of the suspects.

None of them were at fault. Because we never had custody of the suspects from the start," he stressed in an interview. "If there's anyone who's at fault, it's the police of Subic. What did they do?"

Gonzalez had been accused by the victim's lawyer, counsel, Rolando Lapeña, of colluding the six Americans.

"I don't think that should be raised there. He first been asked on the same issue last Thursday," Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, a member of the legislative committee on the VFA, said on an interview. "He's now talking of the budget. Let the other senators ask the questions."

The senator, who asked not to be named, also said that instead of bickering over why the prosecutor panel failed to take custody of the suspects, the top prosecutor and justice officials should prepare for the arraignment of the suspects when the case gets to court.

He said it was Lapeña's job to prepare the complaint and the victim for the trial.

Bickering over the failure of the authorities to take custody was useless because the presence of the servicemen was "lost yet unsolved" at the preliminary investigation of the case, the lawmaker said.

The trial court would only require their presence during the arraignment, assuming that the prosecution recommend the filing of charges against them, he said. "We should prepare for that," he added.

Olongapo folk . . .

Front Cover

Front Cover

Front Cover

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Pork probe call diversionary ploy, claim senators

By TJ Burgonio
and Michael Lim Ubac

A CONGRESSMAN'S CALL FOR closer scrutiny of the use by lawmakers of their "pork barrel" was just an attempt to divert public attention away from the Senate inquiry into the alleged misuse of the P728-million fertilizer fund, senators said yesterday.

"It's not a problem for me. That's a problem for those who misused their pork barrel if they did," Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said in an interview. "It's a reaction to divert attention from the current investigation of the fertilizer fund."

Sen. Manuel Villar Jr. said he was open to the idea of examining the use of the pork barrel of both senators and congressmen, suggesting that this should be posted on the Internet.

"It's not a problem if we scrutinize that. But what's happening is that we [lawmakers] seem to be threatening one another with investigations," he said in an interview on dzBB.

House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles called for scrutiny into the use of their pork barrel by lawmakers after colleagues denounced "the trial by publicity" of congressmen in the ongoing Senate inquiry into the fertilizer fund scandal.

Some congressmen, governors and mayors had been identified as proponents of the Department of Agriculture's Ginintuang Masaganang Ani Program, which was partly funded with the P728 million for the purchase of farm inputs for farmers.

Pimentel stressed that members of the House had no reason to complain that they were the targets of the inquiry, saying, "The idea [of the inquiry] was to find the money and its misuse."

Villar agreed: "The investigation was in fact in defense of the congressmen. Since some of them had declared that they did not receive the money, through this inquiry we're trying to find out why they did not get the money."

Deputy Speaker for Mindanao Gerry Salapuddin of Basilan and Davao del Sur Rep. Douglas Cagas, House contingent head to the Electoral Tribunal, dared the Senate to agree to a public scrutiny of their yearly pork barrel allocations.

In a joint statement, Salapuddin and Cagas said that just as congressmen had been open about their pork barrel use, senators should also be made accountable for their Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) to "ensure transparency and prevent indiscretions and mistakes in fund allotments."

They sought the probe even as they decried how the Senate was inadvertently subjecting House members to "trial by publicity" through the fertilizer fund probe.

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AIR TRAVEL EXPRESS

Korean eng'r still missing

SO SOS OF A BOMB on engineer has been found two days after he disappeared from Camp Aguinaldo in the Philippine Coast Guard said.

Efforts to look for the engineer, whose name was not given, have been hampered by a tough search according to PCG spokesperson Lt. Armand Balilo.

Balilo said the PCG auxiliary squadron was forced to halt search and rescue operations yesterday after it was nightfall were banned by big waves.

But two PCG helicopters were still available for the engineer.

Balilo said no definite date to end the search had been set, adding that this would depend on the assessment of the situation by the search coordinator.

The PCG has not been told the engineer's name, he said.

The Bright Sun's 20 other crew members—10 Filipinos and 10 Koreans—were on board on Friday as they set to the Subic after their vessel sank.

They were taken on board the Japanese motor tanker MT Shinyo Ibi.

The Bright Sun had come from Vietnam and was on its way to Subic when it sank.

Leila B. Salaverria

MALONSO

Reserves honor Malonso

SPORTSMAN and writer Julian Malonso has been commissioned colonel in the Philippine Army Reserves, was presented recently in a plaque of honor by the Board of Directors of the Philippines Reserve Command (AFP-PRCOMD).

The award, signed by Col. Amir L. Calanoran of the Philippine Air Force Reserves and commanding officer of RPMSOCOM-capital affairs group, cited Malonso for his loyalty to the Philippine Military Service, having served with distinction in the unit since its organization in February 1964.

"His loyalty dedication to duty and outstanding performance in the field of public information have not only been evidenced by his citations from non-military sources and has rendered him a position of honor in the unit for all time to come," the award said.

Malonso was an active sportsman who wrote on his favorite subject in his many years as a sportswriter, retirement, he continues to contribute articles on sports to various publications.

SPORTS

SEA GAMES ON

Underdog Laos nips Myanmar XI

By Cedell Tupas
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—RIDING ON TIMELY counter-attacks, Laos nipped Myanmar, 3-2, last night at the start of the men's football tournament of the Southeast Asian Games at the Bacolod City Sports Complex here.

Vietnam came from behind to beat Singapore, 2-1, in the second game.

Forward Vene Phaphouvanin struck twice, including the game-winning goal—a coolly placed penalty kick that beat Myanmar keeper Kyaw Min Oung in the 74th minute—as Laos pulled off an upset in the very first game of the historical meet.

"This is good news for the country but we still have to improve," said Laos' Russian coach Valeriy Nikiev, whose team never knew defeat in the 2003 Vientiane Games.

A potential game-tying goal for Myanmar in injury time was nullified after striker Soe Moe Min was ruled offside by linesmen.

Myanmar, a semifinalist in Vietnam, dictated the pace at the start but Laos broke the ice through Chanon Nonpasouxay at the 12th minute.

Min equalized for Myanmar seven minutes later and the tie persisted until Phaphouvanin beat the offside trap with a sweeping run in the 65th minute and finished it off for 3-1.

Myanmar equalized again in the 77th minute courtesy of Mar Lwin, but Phaphouvin came up with the winner after Pyikkyaw Aye Myint Min was fouled by Khin Maung Tun.

RP starts water polo bid today

LOS BAÑOS, LAGUNA—THE PHILIPPINE WATER polo campaign in early tone of duty when it clashes today with Indonesia in the preliminaries here on days before the formal start of the 23rd Southeast Asian Games.

Bantered by veterans who honed their skills in Hong Kong and China this year, the Batanada are expected to sweep past the Indonesians at the start of the single-round elimination.

Game time is 4 p.m. at the crowd-constructed Tesoro Aquatics Center.

"Indonesia is a tough team and they've hungry for the gold but we will be giving them a tougher time getting it," said Philippine Amateur Swimming Association president Mark Joseph.

The Philippines, whose best finish in the SEAG was silver in 1991 in Singapore and 1999 in Brunei, won the bronze in Vietnam two years ago.

The team's head coach is Reynaldo Galang and Edmund Ian Pedro is the assistant coach.

—Steve Anthony Reyes

The WORLD

Lilian Lorenne B. Gutoc

2 days of bomb attacks in Iraq kill 150

BAGHDAD—THE DEATH TOLL FROM A SUICIDE car bomb attack on the funeral of a Shiite sheikh rose to at least 50 from 35, doctors said on Sunday, as the number killed in a spate of attacks over the past two days rose to 150.

Another 75 people were wounded when the bomber blew up his vehicle near a crowded condolence tent at the killed sheikh's funeral on Saturday in Abu Sayda, a small town near Baquba, 65 km northeast of Baghdad.

Medical officials in Baquba, who asked not to be identified, said many victims were badly mutilated, making identification difficult.

Baquba police Lt. Col. Salah Ali said he saw bodies scattered in the street and the blood of victims mingled with large pieces of flesh that had been made by mortars.

"I went to the place. I saw bodies everywhere. The area was completely burned," Salih told Reuters in Baquba.

The attack at the funeral capped a bloody two days in Iraq during which six US troops were also killed.

Sectarian divisions appear to be widening as an insurgency by Sunni Arabs and foreign fighters against the Shiite- and Kurdish-led government and its US backers shows no signs of abating before the Dec. 15 elections.

On Saturday another suicide car bomber killed 15 people and wounded 20 more in an attack on a long number in the Dijeala Bridge area just south of Baghdad.

Five soldiers were killed in two makeshift bomb attacks on a patrol in the northern town of Baiji on Saturday.

The US military said on Sunday a Marine was killed on hostile duty in a bomb attack near Ramadia, about 200 km northwest of Baghdad in the mainly Sunni Muslim province of Anbar, one of the hotbeds of the insurgency.

Their deaths took the toll of US soldiers killed in Iraq since the invasion to topple Saddam Hussein in March 2003 to 2,498, according to information compiled from the military.

Increasingly sophisticated makeshift roadside bombs—known by the US military as improvised explosive devices, or IEDs—are now the biggest killer of US forces in Iraq, accounting for almost 40 percent of deaths.

US and Iraqi forces have been conducting operations against former Arab guerrillas throughout western Iraq in recent weeks in an effort to stem the insurgency before the elections, to allow more forces to vote. Reuters

Cup of coffee a day lowers risk of high BP, says report

TOKYO—A JAPANESE MEDICAL research team has discovered drinking a cup of coffee or two a day could lower the risk of high blood pressure, a report said Sunday.

The team led by a researcher at Keio University conducted the study on 3,324 men aged from their 20s to 70s who visited Tokyo clinics for checkups on lifestyle-related disease from October 2000 to March 2002, the Tokyo Shimbun said.

The study found that people who drank no coffee had the biggest risk of high blood pressure, with the lowest risk of high blood pressure in the category drinking three cups or more, it said.

"It would be good for young and middle-aged people to drink a cup of coffee or two everyday," the newspaper said, citing the research.

"Chlorogenic acid, a type of polyphenol contained in coffee, is considered to have the effect of expanding blood vessels," it said.

But there also is a report that drinking coffee may lead to a neurodegenerative disorder for the elderly. Taking too much caffeine also can cause insomnia and a

another Japanese research team has found a cup of coffee a day halves the risk of colon cancer among women, according to a research team report. AFP

WORLDBRIEFS

Pakistan gets $1.4B in quake aid

ISLAMABAD— Quake-stricken Pakistan feared a sigh of relief on Sunday after world donors pledged almost $6 billion, and vowed to relieve foreign debt for many poor and as industrialists met at a conference of last month's huge tremor. Pakistan, seen as one of the most corrupt nations in a recent global survey, secured over $3 billion in fresh pledges at a donor conference on Saturday, taking the total to $5.83 billion, after the United Nations coordinated of a week-initial response. The Oct. 8 quake killed more than 12,000, mostly in the Himalayan Mirpakistan region of Pakistan-Kashmir and in the NW West Frontier Province, and left hundreds of thousands homeless. Even had grown of a second naturally as winter closes in, threatening people living high in the mountains without proper shelter. Reuters

Opec urges cuts in oil taxes

RIYADH— The world's top energy producers, under pressure to meet global demand, called Sunday on leading consumer states, mainly in Europe, to cut taxes on oil to alleviate hikes in prices. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, which supplies about 40 percent of world oil, said Sunday in a statement from Saudi Arabia, inside the run or the opening of the permanent seat of the International Energy Forum in Riyadh. Saudi Eng Ali Ibrahim, whose Gulf state holds the world's largest oil reserves, vowed to continue to provide enough supplies, but called on leading consumer states to cut taxes on petroleum products. "The policy of the Kingdom is based on providing a reasonable and fair price for oil and to provide enough supplies to all the consumers," he said at the opening, which was accompanied by a dynamic technology industry. "But all the efforts of the producing countries without help from many if they are not met with a positive position by the main consumer states," he said. "These states should alleviate the refund of their citizens by cutting taxes on petroleum products when prices increase." he said. AFP

Japan space probe nears asteroid

TOKYO—A Japanese research probe neared within meters of an asteroid on Sunday and officials there have said it was on course whether it had successfully landed to collect surface samples, Japan's space agency said. The Hayabusa probe, which launched a telescope earlier this month, is on a mission to make a brief landing on the asteroid, collect material, then bring it back to Earth. When Hayabusa was 40 km above the asteroid Itokawa it dropped a small spherical robot into an unpredictable target. Then descended to 11 m, JAXA officials said. At that point, ground-controlled contact with the probe for about three hours, JAXA official Kiyotaka Yashiro said. AP

Sued for bogus dating scam

NEW YORK—Match.com, one of the top Internet dating websites, has been accused of hiring people as "date bait" to go out with some of their non-online customers in messages there to keep paying for the service. A Los Angeles racketeering lawsuit said the lonely hearts website secretly recruited people to send enticing emails to its customers and to go out on dates with them so a way of getting them to keep up their $20 monthly subscription. The company's rogues, branded "fake bait," work on as many as 150 dates a month—from per day—with Match.com customers, who are the ideal search for boyfriends, girlfriends, and possible husbands and wives. AFP

Hu to Bush: China won't tolerate Taiwan freedom

BEIJING—CHINA WILL NOT TOLERATE Taiwan's independence, Chinese President Hu Jintao told his US counterpart George W. Bush during a meeting here Sunday.

"I reaffirmed to President Bush that the Chinese government and Chinese people are committed to peace and stability in the Taiwan Straits," Hu said in a statement after their meeting.

"And we're ready to do our utmost with all sincerity to strive for the prospect of a peaceful reunification of our country.

"That being said, we will by no means tolerate so-called Taiwan independence."

Hu told Bush he appreciated the US president's stated opposition to Taiwan moving forward on formal independence and his commitment to abiding by the "one-China" policy under which Beijing defines Taiwan as part of its territory.

US PRESIDENT George W. Bush and China President Hu Jintao at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing Nov. 20. AP

However, he urged Bush to exercise US influence "[upon Taipei's] provocative moves, arguing that doing so was in the interest of the United States.

"To oppose and check so-called Taiwan independence and safeguard peace and stability in the Taiwan Straits across the common interests of China and the United States," Hu said.

Taiwan separated from mainland China in 1949 at the end of a civil war but Beijing insists it is still a part of its territory that must eventually be reunified, by force if necessary.

Despite switching diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979, the United States remains Taiwan's biggest arms supplier and is bound by US law to help the island defend itself against any attack.

Beijing has said the Taiwan issue is at the core of Sino-US relations and is the most sensitive issue affecting the relationship. AFP

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OPINION

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Horse manure

EDITORIAL

ON ITS PACE, THE FERTILIZER-FUND SCANDAL deserves to be thoroughly investigated. There are 728 million reasons to suspect that the money was misused, possibly to influence the results of a democracy's most important recurring rite: general elections.

But even though it is possible to diagnose last year's still controversial palit from the fund, the fertilizer scandal still requires a comprehensive understanding. If Senate President Franklin Drilon is right, this is a scam that is carried to its method and breathtaking in its brazenness.

We do not know whether Drilon himself, or indeed the other senators who have participated in the hearings of the Senate's committees on agriculture, can view the scandal separately from the political crisis surrounding President Macapagal-Arroyo. A former close ally of the President's, Drilon has led calls for Mr. Arroyo's resignation since that fateful Friday of July 8. It would be a pity if the Senate probe into the fertilizer fund scandal depended alone on opposition to the President; we do not want our senators' attention to stray, for instance, if the trail to Malacañang grows cold.

This is not to say that Palace officials were not involved in the alleged scam; this is only to argue that, whether they were involved or not, the Senate must get to the root of the scandal. The whole fertilizer-fund mess is an object lesson in the abuse of power and the misuse of public funds.

Let's start with the list of "proponents," which the Department of Agriculture used ostensibly to justify the fund in the first place. It includes some 300 congressmen, plus a cluster of governors and mayors. It also specifies amounts in amounts, regardless of which districts the "proponents" represent. The list includes many "proponents" who in fact never made a fund-related proposal.

Then consider the list of fertilizer-fund "recipients." They are about the same in number as "proponents," but not all those who ostensibly made proposals received money from the fund for their pains. In fact, the list of "recipients" includes three blinds: there are those listed as "proponents" but did not in fact receive any amount, there are those who were listed as "proponents" but who received some amount, and finally those who were listed as "recipients," but did not actually receive any amount.

The testimony last week of Aracelis Salas, assistant provincial treasurer of Eastern Samar, was proof that there were the third kind of "recipients." He showed that the provincial government was supposed to have received P6.5 million worth of fertilizer and implements from the P729-million Guimbuang Masaganang Ani program. In fact, the provincial capitol did not receive a single item.

According to the record, a company called Atsume Marketing International was paid P6.5 million in GMA funds for a total of 4,328 bags of fertilizer, for delivery to Eastern Samar farmers. These bags were supposed to have been "accepted" by the office of Eastern Samar Rep. Marcelino Libanan and the office of Gov. Clotilde Sulaiman.

But almost a year and a half ago, Salas discovered an irregularity. "We spoke with [provincial agricultural officer Mr. Lloyd] Agdo and found out that there were no actual deliveries of fertilizer or implements to the provincial government and he, thereafter, issued a certification to that effect dated June 7, 2004," Salas said in his sworn affidavit.

In his testimony before the Senate, Salas said he made the discovery when he personally inquired into the matter, after he had to field questions about the missing bags of fertilizer, "which were supposed to be delivered to the province and availed of by the farmers."

(He couldn't help telling the Senate, rather dramatically: "I wanted for so long to be with this body so that our people and the country would know about these anomalies." We can forgive him for this dramatic flourish, however, because it is clear he has taken a great risk in coming forward.)

It is possible, as some have alleged, that the entire GMA fund was only an elaborate scheme to use government funds to help the President's election campaign. The Salas disclosure helps us get our bearings on this issue. But the real question remains: Who did the actual dirty work, and turned the fertilizer fund into a expensive horse manure?

Press doesn't exist to be cheering squad of gov't

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THE TOPIC OF THE LATE-NIGHT TALK shows last Friday of the two leading TV networks, Channels 2 and 7, were, coincidentally, the GMA versus media conflict. The pro-press/boos-intensified and more-viewed panelists from both sides of the fence and viewers vote clear that the pro-GMA factions did not know what they were talking about.

It is the integrity of the contemporary Philippine press that shines even in the worst bias and blatant journalism pretending to be genuine news, no different from a pail knee pretending to be a winner and the president. And there were several of them, in the two late shows I monitored, who have definitely of being journalism just because they write newspaper columns in some newspapers or bought air time as commentators in some television and radio stations. A columnist or radio-TV program does not a journalist make, but being a "journalist" is the only excuse they can offer to some cases a show-cue to hate and public office. Politicians, honest and incumbent government officials buy space in newspapers and air time in broadcast stations to every any points they want to make and present themselves as journalists and be immune by the electorate when they run for public office. But many of them can't even write and they hire ghostwriters to write for them, and then have their names and mugs plastered on newspaper pages or alleged "columns."

There was a time before material has when newspapers and radio stations hired only professional journalists as commentators and columnists. Later many volunteered as columnists without pay and in fact paid for the space they filled up, and in the case of radio stations, some commentators paid for the air time. Publishers and managers of losing newspapers and stations succumbed to the pressure's blackmail use of the journalist privilege. And that the floodgates of the lakes and hundreds were opened and they are now getting some newspapers and air waves. There are some of the hundreds who polluted the

Progress

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I REMEMBER SOME MY CONVERSATIONS when a question and argument over the subject of elections. They were sometimes in cultural differences.

The Japanese was telling me about the party system in Japan and the relative popularity of individual politicians. I asked him if anyone had been elected more than five times in his district/municipality. He found the question almost incomprehensible. "Why would anyone want to do that?" he asked when he had found his voice. "To advance his political career," I said. But if he did that, he would have to politically career altogether," he said, "because would vote for him." Why is that?—I asked. "Because he could no longer be trusted, he would be deemed incapable of bringing progress."

The German executive editor I used, was a political expert covering an German elections. I asked him to what extent cheating occurs in their elections. His reaction was just as remarkable. He found the question most incomprehensible. He wanted to know what I meant by it. He reviewed the memory of some cheating having occurred in an obscure part of East Germany after reunification. Quite simply, nobody thinks to cheat in elections. It is just not done.

I remember another time when I was asked my self-centered feedback last Friday. The issues were grouped under the heading "Looking ahead." The issues were the ousting on, the Senate probe, the impeachment, and the 2007 legislative cycle. Curiously enough I am no longer surprised by the fact, the letters that urged readers to stop protesting coincided with EDSA 1 being in the United States and the ones that urged protesters to return in yield to majority come from Filipinos living in the Philippines.

In the first category, one argued that "the issues for GMA and they have been stretched enough about [sic] to [sic] republican enough to maintain the destruction of the return of the majority." The letter writer said that despite the cheating, GMA was anyway enough probably by a smaller margin. Another argued that GMA is not the only leader in this country. Just as others who are basically good ones. Why

should we spend our time kvetching about government then? Let EDSA 1 will enough about us and be distracted by her comments.

I will not go into the second category. The arguments there are pretty much the same and the best part is put forward in this space for some time. Duh—does a whole paragraph from one of my favorite columns.

It is the random thing to refute the arguments put forward by those who urge us to move on. The notion that GMA won the elections anyway despite the cheating is wrong on two grounds. First, it is simply not true. As we have evidence of the actual election returns shown—which is why any attempt to demonstrate this, such as by impeachment trial or by Senate hearing, is being vociferously torpedoed. Second, the other set of writers are right. What kind of leaders are you sanctioning the fact when you suggest that it is all right for them to cheat in their exams as long as they can prove afterward they would have passed even if they hadn't cheated?

Leave GMA to her conscience? She hasn't got any.

It is the easiest thing to refute these arguments, but that is the least of our worries. The worst of our worries is that these arguments are being advanced at all. That is the power problem. We see that truly sucks addressing. Those have we reached a pass where we are willing to accept cheating in elections as long as the cheater can claim after wards that he would've won anyway, he would have won anyway without it? How have we reached a pass where we are willing to accept a president who did not win the elections because she also has good people in her government? How have we reached a pass where we are willing to accept that corruption is not pervasive as long as the corrupt can claim that they would've done the same stuff it were has some pseudo-nominee in its pockets.

On the other hand, the public has nobody to blame but the press. The press is the eyes and ears of the people. It tells them what they should know. It can be compared to an unbalanced, who cares to be watchdog and protector for the people.

In other words, our society needs something to balance the immense powers of the government. And that, in its own limited way, is the role of the press. That is the "balance" that everybody should be crying for.

One of the panelists asked: What about accountability? The point seems attentive to the people: what about the media?

Two of the professional journalists (God bless them) replied that media accounts to the public, not, and must quickly than do the public. Individuals are known for their actions and words. The public can vote them out every four years. But the media account for their actions every time they write something. A media author that loses its credibility quickly loses readers and viewers. The public is very discerning and will not tolerate misleading.

Whereas what happened to the media during the martial law nights. The press published only "positive news" about the government and rarely any "negative news." What happened? The public did not believe the establishment press and published the underground press such as the Inquirer and We Forum. The same thing will happen if we follow the dictator of Arroyo and her defenders to restrict the "good news" and play down the "bad news." Nobody would believe the media and soon underground press would be born.

Things will not be better just because media don't report them. Prices will still be high, jobs will still be unavailable, millions will still have no roofs over their heads, and corruption will still be alive and well. The only thing that will be there. Burying our heads in the sand and pretending there don't exist won't make them disappear.

Civic liberalization

IT USED TO BE THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN citizenship; now it has become easier. And it is now more difficult to lose one's natural-born citizenship.

Naturalization under the old law was quite an ordeal. It still is for those who do not qualify to seek naturalization under the liberalized law; in other words, one year in advance with a mechanism of intention to seek naturalization. This is followed by the hearings, during which the applicant must prove that he or she has all the qualifications and none of the disqualifications found in the Naturalization Law. This can surely tell how long the hearings will last and how much it will cost. But even after the applicant has won a favorable verdict, he or she must still go through a two-year period of probation, during which the applicant may not leave the country. Only then can the applicant—another hearing is held to determine whether the applicant has fulfilled all the requirements of the probation. It is only after this that the applicant can get a go signal from the court to take the oath of allegiance as a naturalized citizen.

That is not all, however. If at any time it should appear that there was a lapse in the process of naturalization, the matter can be reopened.

During the Marcos regime, there was an easier process through which many obtained naturalization. By presidential decree, an executive body was created which was authorized to process applications for naturalization. The process was not as strict as the judicial process. Those who passed this process were recommended for the naturalization and they received it by presidential decree.

The Marcos process is no longer in effect, but in 2000, something similar, the Administrative Naturalization Law, was restored by Congress. I have personally seen how easy it is to get such a law awarded since I was for a favorable recommendation. It was he who cleared the way, yes, there was no way for the process to be stopped.

Dual citizenship, dual voting rights, dual and sometimes conflicting allegiances. Our Constitution does not allow dual allegiance "inimical to the national interest" and their sentiments Congress is faced with dual allegiance. Congress has dealt with it by normalizing it through the Dual Citizenship Law.

The dual allegiance argues, however, it hidden behind a title that does not speak of dual citizenship. The law is entitled "An Act Making the Citizenship of Philippine Citizens who Acquire Foreign Citizenship Permanent, Amending for the Purpose Commonwealth Act No. 63, as Amended, and for other Purposes." The essence of the law is that any natural born Filipino citizen who acquires or has acquired foreign citizenship is deemed not to have lost his or her Philippine citizenship provided he or she takes the oath of allegiance prescribed by the law.

Obviously the law was made not under the guideline of "dual allegiance" which the Constitution says is "inimical to the national interest." The law states this issue by being silent about the effect of the retention of Philippine citizenship on the allegiance owed to a foreign state. While silent on this issue, the law, in effect, recognizes the possibility of reserving a conflicting allegiance to a foreign state. Thus, the law requires express renunciation of foreign citizenship (which nevertheless) includes foreign allegiance) by those who run for elective office or accept an appointive office in the Philippines. It also requires that those who intend to vote in the Philippines or to accept public office should not be holding public office in a foreign state or be in active military service in his republic. Holding public office and participating in the military are manifestations of allegiance.

The law contains is a novelty (however, even now is free to determine which will consider to citizens.

Another aspect of civic liberalization is the loosening of the requirements for the exercise of suffrage. But I have run out of space for that.

SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

How Musharraf manages to survive

THE DEVASTATING KASHMIR EARTHQUAKE IS ONCE again testing the skills of one of the world's great political survivors: Gen. Pervez Musharraf, president of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, has few friends and trusts enemies. Pakistan's major political parties oppose him, the day-to-day ruling party and the military, he is up against al Qaeda, the great Satan, and has thus far survived the onset of Islam.

Understandably out there, pointing for Musharraf, are Islamic militants because of having dumped other Muslims in favor of the enemy "wars in Afghanistan and Kashmir. None is Musharraf's wars. army designer him for the same reason. He Pakistan's untold and embedded liberal and left-wing forces. As is yet another military's distaste who united and broke power by force, undermining the development of democracy.

He knew these Musharraf survived to large part, he can thank 9-11. Faced by a military threat from Islamic militant neighbors, Musharraf's military establishment and rival to join the US-led coalition and take up arms against its own enemies, the Taliban. Only a few senior officers with an Islamic bent resisted this straightforward decision. They were soon marginalized, allowing greater room for Washington.

With US help, an economy that had nearly run aground was modernized, helped by swaths of international refund loan write-offs. Even more important were a decision, taken in the hope of shoring off hard-core Islamic groups, to require all expatriate Pakistani earnings to be remitted through official banking channels.

It is one thing that nuclear weapons also are crucial to Musharraf's survival, for they create conditions that distract Pakistan's highly ideological army from its objective of war with India. The dispute over Kashmir had occupied the minds of military planners to strengthen Pakistan's infantry and artillery. Nuclear weapons have changed that, requiring the world's eighth-largest standing army. But nukes, a belief in deterrence, and the growing realization that Kashmir is a lost cause, have freed the army from the hard life of the trenches. Strategy is increasingly irrelevant as the officer class scrambles to build vast personal fortunes.

It helps that Pakistan's military establishment says it all. The chief executive officers of many, if not most corporations, public and private, are retired military officers—many have young. The military owns utilities and freight companies, petrochemical factories, power generation plants, sugar mills, cement factories, oil refineries, private universities, banks and insurance companies, advertising agencies, and more. Just two years of prime real estate in cities, sold to officers for a pittance, have turned into mega housing developments.

Musharraf dedicated his political acquisitions, claiming that they only went to officers, and roughly dismissed criticisms that he or the running of corporations Pakistan's generals inefficient. But then are "efficient" only in the sense that they dampen the fervor to Musharraf posed by the military.

Even Pakistan's Islamists, however, whom Musharraf inherited for again, has reason, when he entered his benign military rule in 1999. Their efforts to impose Islamic rule on the Islamists' call for nationwide protests flopped. The military, after decades of rule, has dismantled all forms of political organization—parties, trade unions and student associations—leaving a Pakistani society disfigured, apathetic and largely unaware of its political potential.

As Islamists' anger at Musharraf's betrayals increases, so does his global standing and image as a world statesman. Former wild-eyed mullahs demonstrating in the streets of Pakistani cities are a boon to his position. Surely the Pakistani public would be to extend its contempt. No harm if it is not utterly dangerous.

But the truth is more complex. Musharraf has effectively between personas. At one moment he is the "responsible" world leader who speaks charmingly to the international media about moderate Islam, or the man, he is the uniformed military officer who has no qualms about using repressive force to suppress opposition, breaks promises or relinquishing power, moves into—eventually—hundreds relationships with students and interests between regime activists as "democratic fringe elements" that "are as dead as the Islamic extremists."

To forward the possibility of a coup, the army is being structured so that those identified as charged with maintaining control the death penalty. This process has deepened pre- and anti-US division within the ranks, both among commissioned and non-commissioned officers, but nothing in Pakistan today suggests that radical change is imminent.

To be sure, there are signs that Musharraf's power-sharing with Pakistan, such as 9/11's violent bombings, will bring new pressures. The United States and Europe will make their usual demands to close down the country's hate-spewing madrasas, and to reform public school curriculum, introduced by the previous Islamic six years ago. Musharraf will pay lip service to all these and do little.

For Musharraf, this means that continuing to lose with the hounds and run with the hares might get harder. But the current constellation of forces suggests that, barring unforeseen developments, his survival instincts will serve him well for years to come.

Project Syndicate

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COMMENTARY

Pervez Musharraf

Indecorous movements

A MALE CHORISTER CONFOUNDED HOW practicing Roman Catholics lately settle the place of women in the Church. He was heard to say of the "bride" in the singing of "Our Father" during Holy Mass. Because it was attributed to the Blessed one, many Catholics thought that a new prohibition had been promulgated, something akin to that on the papacy of the "Immaculate" new pope. A commentator on the matter was Liturgy of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines. At present, Bishop Bonnie Abellar of the Diocese of Calbayog thinks the intimation.

The intimation is given the task of implementing the provisions of the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium) promulgated on Dec. 3, 1963, at the close of the Second Vatican Council. Over the years, the commission has adequately provided direction in coping with the many changes envisioned by the Second Vatican Council, especially where sacramental practices and liturgy. In 1997, however, the commission, at present, the administration's focus is toward the Jubilee of Pope John Paul II's concern with increased attention for renewed evangelization.

Guiding our understanding on the matter of the "building of hands" are the important key words "culture" and "liturgy."

The dimensions of the Mass meeting in Emperor, centering on the theme "Bishops in the Celebration of the Eucharist," concluded with a statement that, despite its notable intentions, was received by some quarters and became the source of the so-called prohibition. The statement stem-

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Antonio J. Montalvan II

rom that "it is possible to eliminate in the sacrosanct inclusive movements or bodily gestures" in the celebration of the sacred Mass.

The diocesan director defines "inclusive" as "unnecessary movements that may disrupt the recollected prayer of the faithful." Also, "inclusive" that can be stated in the matters of dances where there are not liturgical but are called for entertainment. This is one way that liturgical dances are now banned. Nevertheless, there is such a thing as "liturgical movement" (the term often used in the past) that is in keeping with the nature of liturgical celebration. In fact, many Vatican Masses as officiated by the Pope have included these liturgical movements.

The most controversial aspect of the instruction was that "unless banned the holding of the hands" is nowhere mentioned in the document. It reads, "there is no proper instruction on holding hands." On the other hand, it must be noted that the holding of the hands is not in the rubrics, and hence is not the liturgical norm. Notwithstanding that, it simply means to discontinue by saying that is known to the rubrics, and therefore it is prohibited. "Rubrics," by the way, refer to "liturgical guidelines for directives and dignified celebration of the Holy Eucharist."

Recall, however, that 15 to 20 years ago, there was no such practice in the Philippines as the holding of the hands in the singing of "The Father." (Limitless points to the persons as probably an offshoot of the Catholic charismatic movement where this gesture was widely practiced. There is also the possibility of it having simply originated from the faithful's spontaneity. The most that can be said about it is that the practice is not limited and therefore, to go back to the argument, not part of the rubrics.

As the saints time, the Masses, especially where the influence of devices if are concerned, encourages involvement, as has Emperor's celebrations can include elements that are reflective of local cultural practices. Since 1975, for example, the CBCP has approved a Filipino interlocutor, also known as "misa ng Bayang Filipino," which has yet to be given the seal of confirmation by Rome.

Having said that, it has become a common misconception among laypeople that Catholics are free to introduce any contextualized elements in the celebration of the Holy Mass. The Mass has to be guided by a universal set of norms, and that is the function of the Congregation of Divine Liturgy. Since as the measures there are no specific guiding norms governing the holding of the hands, the greater has to be understood as an extension of inclusiveness that have to be guided by the universal norms.

Catholics who are fond of the holding of the hands must take special care that in other countries, no such practice exists. Tardily is culture bound. Some cultures are particularly indifferent to such contact, like some cultures in the West and in Asia. An important consideration is that Catholics who prefer the holding of the hands should be able to respect those who do not wish to do so. It must not be taken as a sign of hesitation. It may simply be diffidence, or simply a desire to be "human."

* * *

Comments to mvmon@ics.edu.ph

The Supremo lives

FROM THE TRANSCRIPT OF THE TRIAL OF Andres Bonifacio. [as translated by Virginia Peñaranda Bonifacio, 1963], we read:

"In the municipality of Maragondon on this 9th day of May, 1897, before the undersigned officer appeared the person of Andrés Bonifacio, 33 years old, married and a native of Tondo, Manila, with occupation as President of the Revolution and head of the Insurgents in the course of the investigation he was asked if he knew of the existence of any other government in this province to which he answered that he did not know...

Asked whether he was in that meeting at Tejeros, [where] Emilio Aguinaldo had been elected President, he replied that because nothing was accomplished in the meeting, nothing resulted from such he neither takes up nor declared null and void, including the oaths taken up by the Magdalena ministers and the election of Secretary Estrera as commander-in-chief of the Tagalog provinces, all of which resulted in proving that [Aguinaldo's] government and anything done with up did not express the will of the people; thus, he was not in a position to say the Generic Emilio Aguinaldo had been elected President of the rebels participating.

Asked whether Emilio Aguinaldo took his oath of office immediately after his election as President, he answered he did not know...

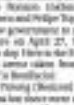
The hearing was adjourned and after reading [the transcript] and informing him of his examination, the declarant signed it. ...he secretary affirmed his assistance."

When Bonifacio signed the transcript of his testimony he wrote, under his name, "Presidente," his Katipunan nom de guerre. He was an idealist to the end.

Not big aside: the power struggle which resulted in the downfall of the Supremo, and his execution at the Spaniards's guardia contra honor a la mentira (where, which is why I have stopped crying to relive Isidro Medina), the saddest thing about Bonifacio's last days is his belief that the soldiers around him were cruelty, their delight in

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III



humiliating people, their love of showing off their authority when no one could resist their beliefs was plain and simple sensibility).

After he left the Tejeros Convention, Bonifacio ended up with his supporters in Limbon, Indang, Cavite. Trouble began when Bonifacio ordered "Tinong"), Ario Ignacio Pio and Felipe Tapsan, the officers sent by the new government to arrest the Supremo, all but three on April 27, 1897. They arrested him the next day. Here is the Supremo's testimony, as he gave it when taken from the transcript (the "declarant" is Bonifacio):

"[T]he next under Col. Tinong [Baldomero] fired five shots from whatever guns but there were no actors shots by the declarant's men. After a while, soldiers under the command of Col. Tinong approached the declarant's house and surrounded them, but the declarants in a loud voice ordered [the] Bonifacio brothers to refuse it to their men not to fire at the approaching men, because they were them but that they were our brothers and that their desperate efforts should first confer with the Supreme Council to avoid them to some means; they aimed their guns on the soldiers inside the windows, disarmed them and shouted loudly for the declarants Supremo who had ordered them of their moves to come out [Bonifacio came out]. Nang makitang hinuhuli [Supremo na magsalita ng aming salagat"]. The declarant came out and embraced the soldiers and told them, 'Brothers, I have not committed any shameful acts nor have I taken your money from you. The reply was a gunshot ordered by a disturbance who was uncertain a mistake, but the bullet missed both men the shoulder and [wound] he

in the throat a shot in a breast—that's behind him. The declarant shouted at them, 'Look whom you are killing, brothers, they are your own country-men!!' Because of hurting his appeal, they [disobeyed] their leader and he [him and] after he fell, an officer stabbed him in the throat."

Bonifacio added that "besides the aforementioned, the soldiers confiscated his clothes and the little money he had somewhat rapacious; declarant further added that he saw Col. Tinong forcing his wife to give up her jewelry [and] he heard with the execution of dishonoring her." (The act, said the Supremo, was frustrated by the intervention of others, but Tinong would try to rape Gregoria de Jesus again in Indang.)

Bonifacio's account shows his fellow revolutionaries acting the way Philippine Constabulary troops were said to have behaved during martial law: firing their guns without any justification, abusing women, treating up the people they arrested. Added insult to injury by Bonifacio's brother, Procopio, is how he was treated.

"Question: Where was he arrested and why were those bloodstains on his clothes? He replied that he was arrested in the trenches of Limbon. The bloodstains came from the wound [on] his upper lip when a soldier hit him with the butt of his gun. He was stripped by the attack, and he did not fight back and consistently surrendered his firearms."

Worse than the Constabulary troops, the soldiers sent to apprehend Bonifacio did behave as expected of soldiers: they arrested Bonifacio in pursuing soldiers' funds). Instead of coming out with it and saying they were arresting him because of his refusal to recognize the new government.

He came to have a sense of cruelty...com-mitted such cowardice—running in my veins that shows itself the moment we're given a little power over others, especially if we're wearing a uniform or hold military rank.

Why this always part of our character as a people, or is it that one of the saddest legacies of the Revolution?

THEY SAID

Spineless

"It's spineless and spineless. I'm didn't even have the courage to confess in person."
—Assistant Secretary Jose Emmanuel Salamat on Senator Juan Ponce Enrile's refusal to take the witness stand in the Senate hearings on the fertilizer fund scam

Violent scheme

"Thabet there is a structural, systematic and violent scheme to subjugate the Arab and Muslim people."
—Fr. Eliseo Mercado, Jr., secretary-general of Ulama, an inter-religious group, on the alleged plot to assassinate Pope Benedict XVI
—Tonight Show host Jay Leno, reacting to the murder of Philippine Congressman Arturo Pacificador

Hellish money-making

"Easy may pera sa impyerno, pahirap doon ang mga nagsasabi ng mali sa mundo ay hell, hindi nagsasabi ng totoo."
—Noah Tan, host of the Radio Veritas talk show Kapihan sa Sulo at guest of politicos who had earlier engaged in scathing banter

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I'd take Filipino anytime

I HONESTLY CAN'T SEE HOW ADOPting English as our national language, as proposed by Senior writer Manuel Tay, could unify our nation. (PDI, 11/15/05) When I meet Filipinos from other parts of the country, we converse in Filipino. In fact, I remember a guy from Ormoc who, after greeting me in English, immediately switched to the vernacular when I responded in the dialect.

It's not that I am advocating that we totally do away with the English language. If we did that, we would drastically reduce our repertoire of communication modes. Also, it would make recruitment problems for our call centers, likewise, how would our doctors, nurses, teachers and programmers go to the United States, Singapore and the United Kingdom if they weren't good in English? But then, it's probably where the problem lies.

We're quick to leave our country in pursuit of greener pastures. While Japan and South Korea tear out of the ashes to become the high-tech powerhouses they are today—mind you, without being conversant in English—we can only boast that 10 percent of our people are in space working abroad, while most of us who live here do so poverty. Also, you go to Singapore and Malaysia and speak in their streets in a language that hardly qualifies as English against the backdrop of decimeters. Flyovers, broadband Internet and the latest gadgets. English proficiency sure are much of a factor in their success.

In fact, their fluentness in English forced their professionals to think long and hard about how to improve the situation of their country, unlike here, where we drink long and hard about where we should live again for emancipation. I don't know about Tay, but in the places where I've been to, I love most opening to our countrymen in Filipino. From the beaches of Pangasinan, to the cavelike of Dumpanga, to the university town of Iligan, to the mountains of Luzon and Bicol, to the burning city of Davao, to the remote islands of Batanes and even to the Philippine Embassy in Seoul, Korea, I get around speaking Filipino and not English. Even in my classes, I teach in Filipino. In fact, the only complain videos I've have in English because they have a hard time understanding countries introduced in that studly text book in English. I don't know about other people but I like the fact that we have a national language—Filipino.

It may not be perfect, but it is a common denominator that we can use to communicate with each other. Some Cebuanos may be pronouncing me, but isn't calling Cebuanos Bisaya just as unfair as calling Tagalog Filipino? Think, if you will, in English, your favorite swear couple. I'll take Filipino with me wherever I go around the country, comfortable with the fact that I have a much bigger chance of being understood and accepted as one of our own, a Filipino.

—MICHAEL EDWARD, ajdwards@up.edu.ph, ajdb.wdw.ph

LETTERS

Basketball in SEA Games now in Lina's court

THE CURRENT SPAT BETWEEN THE Philippine Olympic Committee and the Basketball Association of the Philippines, which has led to the banning of the Philippines from any Filta-sponsored events—hence, a very disgusting, to say the least, is still despite our country's national basketball team, composed mostly of the Philippine Basketball Association's best players, of the chance to win championships, including the gold medal in the SEA Games to be held here in the Philippines starting this December.

There's been a lot of charges and countercharges on who's to blame and who's the bad guy. Some quarters have to maintain that politics was behind the expulsion of the BAP by the POC and Filta's interference. It is unlikely that basketball will not be played in the Games.

However, there's still a glimmer of hope, if all the contending parties set aside their own personal interests and pride. There's still time that this impasse will be resolved as long as the two leading organizations, the POC and the BAP, come to terms and forge a "win-win" compromise with only the best interests of the sports concerned. Here's my proposal:

1. The POC should set aspirations of the BAP that recognizing the BAP as the authority on amateur basketball in the country. This will result in Filta reimbursing its membership dues to FIBA.

2. The BAP must relinquish the exclusive control of choosing and fielding a national team to the POC, which has given the Filta support in international competitions.

The second condition is very crucial and the most difficult to achieve this since the issue of contention when the BAP emerged as an "opportunist" with the POC and other bodies on the formation of its national team. The BAP should not insist on fielding its "own" team for there is no other team stronger than the one formed by the Filta's basketballers. The ball is now in Joey Lina's court.

—STEPHEN L. ESCOBIDO, Lapu-Lapu City, kwame.kaydeedo@yahoo.com

Bad precedent

IT IS DISTURBING TO KNOW THAT THE Bataan provincial board has passed a resolution (resp. Resolution 6 of RA 9482 ("The Animal Welfare Act of 2006") as an excuse to butcher dogs and to protect establishments selling dog meat. (PDI, 11/14/05)

Section 6 states: "The killing of any animal other than cattle, pigs, goats, sheep, poultry, rabbits, carabaos, horses, deer and crocodiles is likewise hereby declared unlawful." The exception to this rule is clear—when the killing of the animals on the case, dogs) is done in "religious rituals or and established religious tenets or a ritual required by cultural or ethnic norms of indigenous cultural communities."

If the lawmakers of the province of Bataan imply that dog-meat eating is required by the society of the indigenous peoples of the Cordillera, I would want to know, as a Filipino, what our Department of Tourism says about this suggestion. Does it see an exciting cultural practice that is worth incorporating in its POOR Philippines program? What ethnic or tribal meat can be marinated, made tapa-ses and restaurants that we, Filipinos, can showcase to the whole world to see? If, indeed, slaughtering dogs is an ethnic ritual, may the selling and consumption of dog meat justify the declaration of a region's exotic and monstrous as sacred religious rites and, therefore, they should be left alone by the police to sell dog-meat dishes?

The Bataqueño provincial board's resolution on this issue, even if a limited one (only within the Cordillera region, unfortunately, sets a bad precedent that is definitely in poor taste (pun intended).

One common guess what might be adopted in the future due to this suggestion. For one, this opens the possibility of a Filipino not declaring class (left) swearing a pair of so-called Filipino shoes would see, as a people, for purposing to the global community? The DOT should make a close and firm stand on this issue or it will be "farm-sites-sour" Philippines from hereon.

Furthermore, perhaps man dog meat eating is purportedly a "talented practice" does not constantly mean it is right. Slavery was once a cultural practice in England, to a female circumcision in some countries in Africa. Would the section of the resolution state his daughter must be circumcised to with a "cultural practice"?

Our country is in the 21st century, and we have a repugnance of being educated and highly sophisticated. Why does the board member want us to go back to the time of the dark ages?

Finally, let me quote a noted literary figure, George Bernard Shaw: "Animals are my friends, I don't eat my friends."

—LUIS BUSTAMANTE JR., junior researcher/ spokesman, Animal Kingdom Foundation Inc., bustamantejr@yahoo.com

Old-fashioned

WE THANK THE INQUIRER FOR ITS EXCELlent editorial about manners (PDI, 11/13/05), for paying attention to this subject matter. I applaud the Inquirer for giving the subject an important place in the paper. You are probably more aware than I am of the decline of civic and behavior in our society.

It is appalling when we see around us—mainly our friends, relatives, people in the media—uncouth behavior. I attribute this to ignorance and to self-pride, but most of all, to lack of example and carelessness. Good manners are first learned at home, and then reinforced in school. However, many parents themselves have no idea at all about good manners.

He must realize that good manners are never outmoded. In fact, to behave like a savage is to be old-fashioned.

—LILIBETH FRANCIA GUERRERO, 43 Hill Drive cor. Arch Avenue, Beverly Hills, Antipolo, Rizal

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Across the NATION

Controversial ex-cop gunned down

By Carmela Reyes
PDI Central Luzon Desk

PLARIDEL, BULACAN—FLORENCIO "FLIT" PARILla, a former policeman who was tagged as the top henchman of a suspected drug lord, was gunned down by armed men in Barangay Poblacion here on Sunday morning.

Police said Parilla, 53, was driving his Ford pickup truck when the attack took place at around 6:30 a.m.

Supt. Arthur Felix Asis, Plaridel police chief, said the suspects, who were aboard a van and another vehicle, blocked Parilla's path as he was driving near a Chinese temple in Barangay Poblacion here.

Police said the suspects were armed with 9 mm pistols and Armalite rifles and shot Parilla at close range.

Asis said they were looking into the conflict in the illegal drug trade or a personal grudge as possible motives for the attack.

He confirmed Parilla's contacts and involvement in the illegal drug trade in Bulacan, saying the former policeman remained in the police's radar of his alleged suspected drug deals.

Parilla's involvement in the illegal drug trade surfaced in 1997 when he was named as the top henchman of suspected drug lord Alberto Tiongco.

Tiongco tapped Old National Bureau of Investigation chief of illegal drug kingpins in the country. Whom and besides reports described Tiongco as the alleged "godfather" of illegal drugs syndicate and had extensive politicians and police and military officials as his protectors.

Tiongco was also chief of the boastful diversion of the Bulacan-based weekly newspaper Lawan Ito, which Parilla published.

'Freedom of spit' in Bontoc curtailed

BONTOC, MT. PROVINCE—Officials of Barangay Poblacion (town center) here have curtailed the residents' "freedom of spit" and their chances to paint the town red.

More than 20 residents who chew betelnut (or buyo), a betel nut concoction, were arrested by the police not to spit on pavements and walls in the main streets or else they would be fined by as much as P500.

Montilla is a mixture of betel or areca palm nut, grated or piper vine leaves and lime or tobacco and ground seashell.

Residents and people in the central Cordillera have long practiced mommy chewing because it staves off hunger and fatigues.

But the numbing spittle from the mountain is nasty at bloodred and is hard to clean. As a result, most of the walls and pavement in the business district here have a disfiguratively red shown.

Town officials have asked the four urban barangays of central Bontoc—Poblacion, Di, Samoki and Calaccad—to enact ordinances to penalize indiscriminate spitting of betelnut juice and ground seashell.

Frank Cimatu, PDI Visit Sites Luzon Bureau

Militant leader in Angeles slain

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—AN ORGANIZER of the rebel peasant group Kadamay was shot dead in Angeles City on Saturday, reports from the police and the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) said.

Errol Sembing was walking on Bayan Street in Barangay Lourdes Sur in that city when one of two men, on board a motorcycle, shot him in the chest and stomach.

Reports from Bayan said Sembing, also a member of the party-list group Bayan Muna in Pampanga, was the 21st victim of extrajudicial killings by suspected militants for men in Central Luzon since September this year.

Bayan Polimar, Bayan Central Luzon chair, described Sembing's murder as "another attack on progressive leaders by the military in their reign of terror."

The most recent attacks on activists in the region happened on Oct. 25 and 26. These killed Hacienda Luisita labor leader Ricardo Ramos; Bayan Pampanga leader Francisco Rivera and his two companions, and Bulacan transport leader Dolorico de Leon.

"This again confirms the military's aim of annihilating the leaders and organizers of Bayan and its affiliate organizations," Polimar said.

He said he could not think of any other suspect with such motive and capability as the military.

The military's Northern Luzon Command and Maj. Gen. Jaime Delparan Jr., chief of the Army's 7th Infantry Division covering Central Luzon, had denied orders in the killings, pointing to the enemies of communist groups as possible suspects. Rinalyn Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Negros town seen ethanol plant site

SURIGAO CITY—THE PROVINCIAL GOVernment and businessmen from Negros Occidental are now taking steps for the construction of an ethanol plant in Sta. Carolina town, about 60 km south of here.

Gov. George Arcain and Negros Oriental Representative Teves, businessmen Julio Ty and other local entrepreneurs were seriously considering putting up an ethanol plant in Tandang Valley.

The governor was with Teves and other provincial officials in China to visit some ethanol plants there.

The Tandang Valley is a 10,000-hectare government land located in the mountains of Valencia, Sibulan, Sta. Catalina and Siaton towns.

Arcain said that with the help of the provincial government and the National Development Corp., Teves said his partners would commission experts from China to formulate a plan for the plant. Jhonny Arnaudin, PDI Visayas Bureau

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MILF to get safe conduct passes

COTABATO CITY—[illegible] GOVERNMENT WILL issue safe conduct passes to leaders of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), who would attend the opening ceremonies of the 23rd Southeast Asian Games, Youth Leaders Gov. Emmanuel Pifiol said.

Pifiol said that Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose Peping Cojuangco, who is also Philippine SEAG organizing committee head, had informed him that President Macapagal-Arroyo has already approved the issuance of safe conduct passes, which would allow MILF officials to leave the ISDC's premises.

"The government will provide safe conduct passes. Official invitations will soon follow," Pifiol said quoting Cojuangco.

Pifiol earlier urged MILF leaders to attend the SEAG opening on Nov. 30 to show to the world they are for peace.

"Their participation as guests would be an opportunity to show to Muslim leaders in Southeast Asia that peace efforts are gaining ground in Mindanao," he said.

Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson, said that "at all likelihood, Chair Murad [Ebrahim] may come and join other Moro leaders in the opening program."

Kabalu also joked that the MILF could also send a basketball team to play exhibition games.

He said that by middle of next week, the MILF, after holding a central committee meeting, will come out with a statement on who among its leaders would attend the SEAG.

Pifiol said he was even willing to accompany Murad, MILF political affairs chief Ghadafi Jaafar and other MILF officials from the Cotabato airport to Manila to show his support for the peace process. *Edwin Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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Sierra Madre logging denounced

LUCENA CITY—RENEWED LOGging by Timberland Forest Products Inc. (TFPI) in the Sierra Madre portion of General Nakar town has met strong opposition from multisectoral groups in Quezon.

Alfredo Glorioso, chair of the Quezon Provincial Multi-sectoral Forest Protection Council committee on infrastructure, called it "reprehensible and questionable" the renewed operation of TFPI, owned by Rolando Jaggar Philippg, under its Integrated Forests Management Agreement (IFMA) with the government that covers 30,000 hectares.

Glorioso stressed that the reinstatement of TFPI's lines was without public hearings.

General Nakar town Mayor Bernardo Avellaneda, whose election victory was nullified by a court, also expressed surprise when he was told a week later that the IFMA had been reinstated.

"How could that be? It doesn't have any endorsement from the local government," he said.

Lawyer Ann Pesat, executive director of Tanggol Kalikasan, opposition environmentalist group, said the reinstatement violates the Supreme Court ruling that banned logging in areas with slopes of 50 percent and above.

Pesat said the reinstatement of TFPI's logging operations violates the Philippine Constitution, which provides that the state shall protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology.

Pesat also said the reinstatement violates the Philippine Environment Code, which prohibits logging in areas with slopes of 50 percent and above.

Pesat

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3rd diocesan synod tackles priests' ethics

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—AMID GROWING CONCERNS over the lack of priests and misconduct among the clergy, Jaro Archbishop Angel Lagdameo unveiled priorities of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines has convened a historic diocesan synod this week to address various concerns of the clergy and the Catholic faithful.

The three-day synod, which ended Saturday, was held at the St. Vincent Ferrer Seminary in the city for the archdiocese and the first in 72 years.

The first synod was convened by Bishop Dionisio Dougherty in 1911 while the second was convened by Bishop James Hyde Donahey in 1992.

A diocesan synod is composed of priests, lay and religious people "about the bishop summons to assist him in taking care of the archdiocese along with other commissions and groups.

Fr. Robert Amadeo, moderator and secretary-secretary general of the synod, said the sessions tackled those of the 14 concerns raised by the commissions of the archdiocese.

These are the life and ministry of the clergy, vocation promotion and formation of the religious women. The other concerns will be tackled in succeeding sessions.

Changing world

"We need to ask ourselves if we are getting the Church's message across to our flock and if we are still effective in this fast-changing world," Amadeo told the bureau in an interview.

Among the proposals included in the working papers on harassment (abuse) was the drafting of the Oriental Archdiocesan Anti-Abuse, a manual containing a code of ethics for the clergy.

Amadeo said the code would serve as a guide in dealing with acts of misconduct committed by priests including excessive gambling, lack of financial and administrative transparency to parishes and sexual misconduct.

The synod was attended by 329 participants including Lagdameo, 60 priests and 11 lay people. The rest were members of religious congregations and representatives from other Christian denominations.

Discussions were "very lively" and ended late at night especially on discussions on the life and ministry of the clergy, said Amadeo.

The synod also tackled the growing concern over the continued decline in the number of young men who enter the priesthood.

"At the current rate, the archdiocese will face a shortage of priests in the next ten years," said Amadeo.

The ratio of priests to parishioners in the Archdiocese now stands at 1: 10,871, way below the ideal ratio of one priest per 4,000 parishioners.

Shortage of priests

Amadeo said they need to ordain five priests each year to maintain the current ratio but this year, only three priests were ordained and several priests had also retired.

The synod recommended the implementation of a systematic vocation promotion program "that would reach basic in parishes, schools and families," an increase in the archdiocese's financial subsidy to students of the seminary One of the reasons cited by seminarians who did not become priests was financial difficulty.

Amadeo said the synod proposed the giving of a P100,000 fund for retired priests, to be raised from contributions of the clergy.

At present, retired priests in the Archdiocese receive P5,000 monthly from the CBCP and another P5,000 from the Archdiocese.

The participants also recommended that employees of the Church and parishes be given "just compensation" according to labor laws from considerations of the financial capacity of the parishes.

Nuns and members of the religious orders for women sought greater recognition and appreciation in their contributions in the Church.

The recommendations will be submitted to Lagdameo before he promulgates decrees.

Female nursing stude abducted

CAMP VICENTE LIM, LAGUNA—A 22-YEAR-old female nursing student was reportedly abducted by still unidentified suspects in San Pablo City on Friday, police said on Saturday.

Calabarzon police director Chief Supt. Jose Mencias said hours before the reported kidnapping, the victim left their house at around 9 a.m. to pay her enrollment fees at the San Pablo Medical College.

Mencias said an hour after, the victim sent a text message to her boyfriend informing him that she would go home early.

At around 7:45 p.m., the victim's father received a missed call from an unidentified caller.

Three hours after, the unidentified caller again phoned the father and told him that "they were holding his daughter."

Police said the caller also instructed the victim's father to prepare P50,000 as ransom money.

The suspect likewise threatened the father that they had only two days to pay the amount.

Since then, the family had not received a phone call from the suspects.

A source told the Inquirer that the victim's father, an Army reservist, had sought the help of the Military Intelligence Group based in Camp Eldridge in Los Baños, Laguna. Marlon Ramos, *PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Sex rap filed vs Neda official

From page A1

hostile or offensive environment" for the complainant, "adversely affecting her, thus constituting sexual harassment."

The date-bound Harassment Act of 1995 says sexual harassment consists of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors or physical conduct of a sexual nature by a superior or someone with authority, influence or moral ascendancy over another.

The law says the forms of sexual harassment include verbal harassment such as derogatory comments, jokes or slurs; physical harassment such as unnecessary or offensive touching or impeding or blocking movements; and visual harassment such as derogatory or offensive posters, cards, calendars, cartoons, graffiti, drawings or gestures.

Bail of P5,000 was recommended by the Office of the Ombudsman for Escandor's temporary release.

Another complaint

Another employee at Neda Central Visayas has also accused the regional director of sexual harassment.

The woman, 30 and married, filed a case against Escandor in the Office of the Ombudsman in the Visayas on Sept. 26, 2004.

She was hired as a casual employee from 1995 to 2003 and was assigned to the Sectoral Fifth Congress Program for Children (SFCV).

"Escandor is a man drunk with his power as regional director because he used his position to try and make me give in to his sexual advances, knowing that she does not to renew or terminate my employment contract with his office," she said in her complaint.

The Inquirer learned that the second complainant was married to an employee of Neda Central Visayas who is facing several administrative complaints that Escandor had filed with the Civil Service Commission.

Black armbands

About 10 Neda employees wore black armbands when they accompanied Cruz on Sept. 1, 2004, in filing the complaint of "disgraceful and immoral conduct not germane to public office" against Escandor in the Office of the Ombudsman.

The victim's husband was also there to give her moral support.

In her affidavit, Cruz said Escandor sexually harassed her from 1994 to 2003. She said she opted to keep quiet for fear that Escandor might get back at her, being her superior officer.

She also said she did not want to create unnecessary gossip because it might embarrass her and harass her children.

Cruz said she decided to file charges after receiving reports that Escandor had also sexually harassed other women. She, however, refused to say if these women are also working at Neda.

She first incident happened in 1994, according to Cruz. She said she and Escandor were discussing an invitation from the Department of Agrarian Reform where he told her he was falling in love with her.

She said she "frowned, screamed" were reported several times. Escandor, she said, sent her text messages, reiterating his feelings for her.

She said Escandor even called her at her home expressing his desire to have casual relations with her.

"I found Escandor's actions disgraceful. He is married with children to the fact that his acts were against good morals and public ethics. He seemed to be undisturbed, observing my feelings of harassment over his intent to sit romance, and my composure efforts to look calm and composed," she said in her affidavit.

Chance to clear name

In an interview after Cruz filed the complaint, last year, Escandor said that case did not come as a surprise as it was meant to embarrass him.

He had told the Inquirer that he welcomed the filing of the case because it would give him a chance to clear his name.

Escandor said he believed the filing of the complaint was part of a move to remove him as head.

"They (employees) have been threatening that (in) for a case against him) after I filed several administrative cases against one of the employees. This is just part of the coordinated move to oust me from office," he had said.

Escandor, however, had declined to comment on the second complaint.

The second woman alleged in her complaint that the director cursed her and "I love you more every day!"

She said the director subjected her to "severe anxiety, terror and anxiety for years."

"RD Escandor is without respect and cudy to my dignity as a woman, wife and mother but also to the dignity of his own wife and family. He is a deceitful man, a hypocrite of the highest order because while doing his unwanted sexual advances to me, he presented himself to the Iloilo 7 staff as an upright father and husband, and as a moral and honest supervisor," she said in her complaint.

In her affidavit, she alleged that there were several occasions that she was harassed, citing one instance when Escandor allegedly pulled her toward him and tried to kiss her on the lips.

She said Escandor's advances had made her feel "cheap."

She kept silent for several years out of fear and embarrassment, she said. She said she was emboldened to file her own case after another employee had filed a sexual harassment case against Escandor. With a report from the PDI Visayas Bureau

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Commonwealth Avenue among most dangerous roads, says MMDA

COMMONWEALTH AVENUE in Quezon City remains one of Metro Manila's most dangerous roads.

Data from the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) showed that the stretch of Commonwealth Avenue has been the site of an increasing number of accidents involving pedestrians.

A year-to-year comparison of the MMDA's Road Safety Unit (RSU) revealed a rise in road accidents along Commonwealth Avenue that injured and killed pedestrians from 2003 up to the present.

"Majority of the accidents are really caused by the human factor. The incidents we have recorded mostly involved inattentive pedestrians crossing the street," said MMDA Traffic Engineering Center chief Romeo Ong.

RSU's data gathered through the Metro Manila Accident Reporting Analysis System (MMARAS) showed nine pedestrians have been involved in some 121 accidents along Commonwealth Avenue from January to September this year.

Of this number, 104 accidents caused injuries, while 17 claimed lives. Pedestrian casualties in the last nine months has already exceeded last year's figure of 116 accidents, which included 20 fatal and 106 non-fatal accidents.

Data showed that majority of the incidents involved pedestrians who ignored footbridges and crossed the roughly 95-meter-wide road by maneuvering passing vehicles.

Commonwealth Avenue, which stretches from Elliptical Road to Regalado Avenue, has at least six footbridges in every direction.

In 2004, the RSU recorded 75 accidents on the thoroughfare, including 23 fatal accidents and 54 incidents that injured pedestrians. From June to December 2005, the MMDA has tied 39 accidents involving pedestrians, of which 20 resulted in deaths, while 19 caused injuries.

The figures added up to a total of 345 pedestrian-related incidents on Commonwealth Avenue, including 79 accidents that involved deaths, and 267 that left injured pedestrians.

To reduce the number of accidents, the MMDA has designed a detailed redevelopment of the avenue's 36.2-km stretch set to be started by January.

"We would add footbridges there because we know that there are many accidents involving pedestrians, especially during the weekends," said MMDA assistant general manager Cora Cruz.

Sheryl Quintanilla

Fires kill 2 in Makati, Tondo

A SENIOR FIRE RAGES A factory compound in Makati City on Saturday, killing one and leaving some 200 families homeless.

The dead factory was identified as Alicia Mercadero, 55.

Arson investigator Fire Officer 2 Wilfredo Ninda said Mercadero was found dead inside the bathroom of a neighbor's house around 8 p.m. the other night in a two-storey unit at 287 Jupiter Street, Barangay Bangkal, Makati City.

"We had an inquiry, and he had no house. He may have just sublocked. It's possible that he was not able to get out because the house where we found him was locked," Ninda said.

"Saturday morning, another fire hit Tondo, Manila, killing a 5-year-old boy. "This is the third time this year that the compound burned," SFO1 Emmanuel Gaspar said.

The victim identified as Fitzie Carlo Hernando was burnt beyond recognition while sleeping on the second floor of the dwelling.

Firemen doused flames to bring fire down on the kitchen from the arson investigators added.

Around 40 shanties and P300,000 worth of property were destroyed by the fire. Sheryl Quintanilla, Margaux C. Ortiz

SUERTRES 1 4 2 EZ2 25 19

METRO
Editor Ester G. Bisquera

SUPERLOTTO 6/49
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QC's anticarnap unit chief sacked

By CJ Yap

THE CHIEF OF QUEZON CITY'S ANTI-carnapping (Antica) unit has been relieved of his post following the arrest each of car thefts in the city.

Quezon City Police District director Chief Supt. Marnix Rodeseno Jr. ordered on Friday the dismissal into last month of Antica unit chief Police Senior Inspector Jaime Santiago, but declined to say the reasons for his order.

The former Antica chief's term was marred by the rise of carjacking in the city, with at least 12 cases reported in October alone, not counting parked-car thefts.

Since the start of the year up to Oct. 25, a total of 2,296 cars were stolen in Quezon City. Of the total, 70 cars were forcibly taken from their owners at drivers while 226 cars were stolen while parked.

Chief Insp. Rodolfo Jamias, head of the Police Intelligence Division (PID), was tapped to replace Santiago. Santiago, however, still remains a member of the task force headed by Senior Supt. Samuel Pagdilao, Rodeseno said.

Five carjacking cases in the city have been recorded since January because Accor chief.

"But, he said, could be a matter of simple luck, or due to the aggressive police campaign against carjackers.

The last carjacking case involved TV show host Iya Villania's black Nissan Patrol which was taken at gunpoint from her driver by two motorcycle-riding men on Part 4 on Sgt. Esguerra St. near the ABS-CBN studios.

Villania's car was recovered Thursday from a house in Vista Real Subdivision in Barangay Commonwealth in Quezon City during a buy-bust operation conducted by operatives of the Traffic Management Group.

Jamias said he heard the hours when the unit was still under the PID. In early 2005, the latter split from the PID, as police could concentrate on car theft cases, Rodeseno said.

Jamias said agents in civilian clothes would patrol car theft-prone areas, particularly Marikana Avenue, Katipunan and Aurora areas.

Other carjacking hotspots in the city are Quezon Avenue, Batasy Avenue, Timog, Scout Tuazon, Tandang Sora and Commonwealth.

He said his intelligence background would help in unmasking the carjacking syndicate prowling the city, especially their financiers.

"It's important to know your enemies. Once you have identified them, then you can apply pressure to flush them out," he said.

Meanwhile, the police were still trying to confirm whether a certain "Ingay de Leonardo" indeed existed.

Patrick Bueno, one of two men arrested in Santa Rosa buy-bust operation, had told the police that it was he he knew who had asked him to sell or pawn the cars, including Villania's Nissan Patrol.

Yuson said he simply acted as "the middleman."

"The investigation continues," SPO1 Special Operations head Supt. Edmundo Bacungan said. "But right now we have not validated whether this guy is really the person that he has been reasoning with."

"We will reassess if he has known more members his exact address. We'll probably do it on Wednesday," Bacungan said.

With Lupe A. del Puerto

MMDA may include Sundays in bus scheme

By Tarra V. Quismundo

THE METROPOLITAN MANILA DEvelopment Authority (MMDA) is considering moving or lifting the dispatch of buses during the increasing September days of the year in anticipation of the higher commuter volume on Edsa during the yuletide season.

Bayani Lee Depositario, the MMDA bus lanes' implementing in Organized Bus Routes (OBR) system, from Mondays to Saturdays. It excluded transport from the bus scheme due to the low commuter volume on those days.

"We might need to implement OBR on Sundays because Christmas is approaching, and we expect that many commuters will go shopping and bus companies might think of increasing the buses their dispatch," Mon Santiago, acting chief of the MMDA Traffic Operations Center, said yesterday.

The OBR is a traffic reduction scheme that placed some 2,000 registered buses playing Edsa under EDSA-controlled dispatch, based on estimated volume in bus stops at a given time.

But the MMDA decided to make Sundays an OBR-free day noting that bus companies and operators them selves limited dispatch during the relatively light-commuting day.

Santiago said the agency saw the need to reconsider this schedule even just for the remainder of the year since more commuters are expected to travel during the holiday season. The ban in demand would prompt bus companies to field more buses.

Buses plying Edsa pass through main shopping destinations including the commercial establishments in Cubao, the Ortigas and Ayala malls, and shopping centers in Baclaran and Alabang.

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John Raoul D. Mercado
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Gov't saves ₱3.9B in debt payments

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As interest rates fall below forecast

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT SAVED P3.9 BILLION in debt payments in the first 10 months of the year as the interest-rate environment had been more favorable than expected.

Documents from the Department of Finance showed that the government's expenses for interest on its loans stood at only P367 billion in the 10 months to October, compared with the P379.9-billion ceiling set for the period.

National Treasurer Omar Cruz earlier said that savings from interest payments were due to the fact that interest rates have been lower than projections. The more favorable interest rate environment was partly attributed to the government's improving fiscal standing, Cruz added.

He cited the case of the 91-day treasury bills whose yield has been hovering at the 5-percent level, when the government originally expected it to average at 6.5 percent this year. This means that the government only has to pay a 5-percent interest on its loans with a 91-day maturity instead of the programmed 6.5 percent.

The lower spending for interest payments would further boost the government's chances of hitting a budget deficit that is lower than the official ceiling of ₱180 billion for 2005.

The DOF had said that the 2005 budget deficit would likely fall below ₱168 billion as government spending in the past months has been lower than programmed. Aside from interest payments, other expenditures such as on subsidies to other government entities have required a lower amount than originally set.

For the January-to-October period, total government spending stood at ₱976.7 billion, or ₱87 billion lower than the ceiling of ₱963.7 billion.

With revenues hitting ₱667.2 billion in the first 10 months of the year, the budget deficit for the period stood at ₱135.3 billion. The deficit figure was more than ₱40 billion lower than the ₱176-billion ceiling set for the period.

The lower than expected budget deficit is an indication of an improving fiscal position, but the government has been doing it largely through tightening of expenditures, which is supposed to be increased if it wants to boost economic growth using fiscal policy.

Resigned Smart exec eyes foreign post

By Clarissa S. Batino

A FILIPINO IN AN INDONESIAN MO-bile phone company awaits Smart Communications Inc.'s marketing whiz, Anamercie Marcoso, who has turned down the offer of PEOPLE PACIFIC CO., LTD. to join its food business.

"I was not fired. I was in fact offered by no less than MVP [Manuel V. Pangilinan] the chance of a year in Del Monte should his chance for the company materialize or a job in Indofood," Marcoso said in a text message. "I, however, graciously passed on either offers and decided to

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Smart feud disARMed

THE MANAGEMENT TEST THAT HAS BEEN bubbling for years in Smart was finally resolved last week with Smart marketing head Antonio R. Martino accepting a CEO position at the new Indonesian cellular phone company Mobile-8.

Mobile-8, incidentally, lists among its board of commissioners ex-Edsa2 Anthony Taberna, who also happens to sit as a board member of First Pacific, Cw-Hong Kong parent of PLDT and Smart.

Martino, a Smart original from day one, had earlier spurned an offer to take up an advisory position at the Ed Moore-led Pacific should First Pacific win in its takeover bid of the fruit and beverage concern.

Outsider Filipino, the Indonesia-based Cesar dela Cruz, who is deputy CEO of First Pacific's Indofood, is expected to head the Philippine operations of the Moore-headed First Pacific's takeover attempt succeed.]

Apparently, Martino grew tired of waiting—or planning, depending on whose side is talking—to succeed to Smart president Napoleon Nazareno, with whom he allegedly had an uneasy co-existence compact until the irreconcilable personality differences got in the way and finally came to a head the other weekend.

What apparently happened was that 30 group-heads met with Nazareno the other Saturday to say they would no longer work with Martino, who reveals in his reputation as a tough task-master and in his 24-7 work habits.

Nazareno then met with Pangilinan and presented the latter with an ultimatum, either Martino goes or he (Nazareno) and the PLDT/Smart CEOs.

But rather than be sidelined to dashboard or to the expected 3rd Moore position (but was being offered to him to define the situation, Martino instead chose to pack up and resign.

In any case, the rumored Mobile-8 offer of triple the present salary was too good to be passed upon, with key Smart marketing executive Gina Lorg already taking the plunge, apparently as advance party for Martino.

Another Nazareno loyalist, Brenda Orchave, has also resigned, apparently to accept an offer from the still-iconic People Support.

Over the weekend, the PLDT and Smart management had their heads full trying damage-control, softening the shell-shocked staff, especially those loyal and will be orphaned by Martino, and assuring the feared retailer.

Siberia condo saved

THE TUSCANY unit of pain player Ricardo Silverio Jr. has been saved for now from the clutches of Silverio's ex-pals buddy Baron Filipino law Aileen "Bobby" Aguirre.

Last Friday Regional Trial Court Judge Ismael Sison Bautista issued a writ of preliminary injunction stopping an Aguirre-connected company from auctioning the Ayala Ave. condo unit amid allegations of questionable rules Aguirre favorites of the original mortgagor papers from Baron Filipino.

Sister Rhonda, who had been praised by Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. for his "efficient administration of justice," also denied the Aguirre lawyers' motion for the judge to inhibit herself.

Ironically, despite his running feud with his namesake father, Silverio's Tuscany unit was represented by the father's lawyer, Vicente Ghiralles, who has secured a Supreme Court victory to retain the Cubicgan estate that had been "foreclosed" by Aguirre from the Silverios.

Silverio Jr. himself wrote a pained letter to dispute allegations that he had forged the family corporate papers when he merely signed the Cubicgan jobs from to Aguirre in the mid-90s, claiming his father does not own a single share in the said Silverio corporation.

He branded as fabrications accounts of his "history of plus-motivated perdilections" that had apparently crept up—not to legal pleadings.

"As to my 'perdilections,' I am an avowed golf addict with a single-digit handicap, an occasional drinker (admittedly, more than 'occasional' in the past) and a doting father I am told," Silverio Jr. wrote.

"Those are the laws of my life, not necessarily in that order."

Heard through the grapevine

A SENIOR-LEVEL lay-up and layup exercise is underway at the Philippine Bank Inc. change.

(Email: cobrales_pilo@hhhCOM or cocktales_pil@yahoo.com)

Resigned Smart exec . . .

From page B1

leave the group for a telecom offer elsewhere," indicated in First Pacific's food-manufacturing interests.

Pangilinan, chair of Smart and its parent firm Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., said he would meet with Smart's managers next week to heal the wounds caused by the latest infighting between Martino and a group of senior officials that included Smart president Napoleon Nazareno and retired chief financial officer Jose Lorenzo.

"There shouldn't be any camps. We are all working for the same company," Pangilinan said in an interview.

Pangilinan stressed that the problem was an internal one and that the Sadler family, which owns First Philippine Holdings (owners of 24 percent of PLDT) did not even know about the infighting.

Martino declined to say exactly which telecom company he would join, except to note that it would be offshore and not a local competitor of Smart.

Other sources said Martino had been offered the chief executive post by Indonesian cellular firm Mobile-8.

Mobile-8 is 70.32-percent controlled by publicly-listed PT Bimantara Citra, previously owned and controlled by former President Suharto's son Hutchinson Tiffatridjaja. Other shareholders included Bimantara subsidiary PT Dwidaladu Pasco Sakti with 8.54 percent, Asiabill with 6.5 percent and a consortium of Quasicomm Inc. and Samsung Electronics of South Korea.

With the Mobile-8 offer on the table, rumors and Martino brought the management infighting to a head last week when he asked Pangilinan to choose between him and Nazareno.

"It was a win-win for him. He either gets to be CEO of Smart or CEO of this Indonesian company," said a source.

Insiders said Martino had been in hot-and-heavy talks with several senior managers at Smart and PLDT. But Martino denied this.

"It is not true that I cannot get along with colleagues and Willy (Nazareno)," he said. "Just a few guys (among policy differences but we always get Willy to resolve it."

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Belle

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

MALL TYCOON Henry Sy has beefed up his group's stake in leisure property developer Belle Corp. to more than 22 percent.

The development comes on the heels of a sharp rise in Belle's earnings from January to September.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, SM Development Corp. has bought an additional 65.2 million Belle shares, bringing its total holdings to 534.6 million shares or more than 22 percent of the company.

In a financial report to the Philippine Stock Exchange, Belle said its net earnings for the nine months ending Sept. 30 hit P445.1 million, a 425-percent increase from P84.8 million during the same period in 2004.

Net revenues from sales of real estate and club shares for the nine months surged by P241.2 million or 74 percent to P568.7 million from P327.5 million in the same period last year. This came mainly from the sales of farm lots at its Plantation Hills project at the Greenlands in Tagaytay, and sales of house and lot units at the company's new residential subdivision, The Parks at Saratoga Hills, also in Tagaytay.

The first phase of Plantation Hills, called The Sanctuary, was launched in September 2003, while the second and third phases (named The Ridge and The Meadows, respectively) were both launched in December 2004. The most recent phase (The Heights) was launched in July 2005.

Total operating expenses declined 12 percent to P79.1 million from P89.4 million after the company disposed of fixed assets. Belle's earnings from real estate operations also surged 88 percent to P264.8 million, compared with P141.1 million in the same period last year.

Pancake House sets expansion

PANCAKE HOUSE INC. is spending roughly P120 million to open new stores next year, restaurant chain chair Martin Lorenzo said.

Lorenzo forecast that this year, the Pancake House chain of restaurant brands would end with 92 outlets, and increase this by 17 more to 109 outlets in 2006.

The chain is composed of Pancake House, Dencio's and the recently acquired Japanese fast food chain Teriyaki Boy. By the end of 2005, the group will have 62 Pancake House restaurants, 20 Dencio's outlets and 10 Teriyaki Boy stores.

In 2006, Lorenzo projected that Pancake House would add six to grow to 68 restaurants, five more to Dencio's to expand it to 25 and six more Teriyaki Boy outlets to reach 16.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

Unwarranted gloating

THE STOCK MARKET AND THE PESSIMISTIC exchange market may be looking upbeat these days, but as I said last week, that shouldn't mean it's time to celebrate, gloat, and/or get complacent. Too many people, especially those in high places, would like us to believe that positive market movements are due to internal developments within our economy. The implementation of the expanded VAT, in particular, tends to be given more credit than it deserves for supposedly lifting market sentiments, and even improving confidence in the economy in general. It should be welcome news if there is indeed stronger confidence from the business community in our economic outlook. But are recent positive market movements in fact being driven by improved confidence due to internal developments within the country?

Fickle funds

Not quite, according to my friend Ireneo Ta, an exceptionally perceptive market analyst whose contrarian analyses have consistently been different and given him gloating rights once in a while. For some time now, he has been pointing out that developments in the domestic stock and currency markets largely mirror the trends in the markets of the entire Asia-Pacific region. One only needs to eyeball the graphs of the Asia-Pacific Dow Jones index and of the Peso to see how closely they move together.

What this means is that the ups and downs of our stock and currency markets are mainly caused by inward and outward flows of global funds into the part of the world in as a whole. The proportion of our stock market transactions coming from local funds is actually a mere fraction of the total. Like it or not, it is fickle foreign funds that have always driven the market, and by all indications, their movements in and out of the region is motivated primarily by global variables like oil and commodity prices, and the strength or weakness of the US dollar in major currency markets.

Hot money

Sure, internal developments within the country may occasionally cause day-to-day knee-jerk movements in our own stock market. But beyond that, what happens in the country would have little to do with general market trends. The exceptions, of course, would be extreme events, whether positive or negative. Declare a debt moratorium, for example, and sure enough, we could expect our markets to collapse overnight.

Right now, there is clear indication that a lot more funds are flowing into the region compared to a year ago. Government data indicate that $2.06 billion flowed in to buy Philippine stocks, debt paper and other short-term securities in the first 10 months of the year. This is more than triple the same period last year. We are talking here of the so-called "hot money" that is to be distinguished from direct investments into factories, equipment and actual production operations.

Global excess liquidity

To, among just a few others, attributes this year's surge mainly to global excess liquidity. That is, there is simply too much money out there looking for a place to go, and much of it is flowing into Asia. We are merely getting our share of it, and analysts keep telling me we are actually at the tailend of the queue. Excess liquidity—or money beyond what is needed to finance real economic transactions—has in fact shot up over the past decade, points out Stephen Roach, Morgan Stanley's analyst in New York. He observes that global excess liquidity is still on the rise even after the US Federal Reserve Bank raised interest rates from 1 percent to 4 percent, a move that has succeeded in reducing excess liquidity within the United States.

But markets are now getting worried as the other major central banks are doing into motion. And the European Central Bank, the Bank of Japan and other central banks have actually been pumping up money supply to stimulate their own respective economies. In the past three months, money supply actually grew 9.6 percent in Australia, 11.2 percent in Britain, 9.8 percent in Canada, 16.8 percent in Denmark, 5.8 percent in Sweden, 6.7 percent in Switzerland, 6.6 percent in the United States, and 6.4 percent in the Euro area. That's a lot of new money pumped into the system. No wonder our region is getting deluged.

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ERC to decide on power supply pact

By Abigail L. Ho

THE ENERGY REGULATORY Commission is set to come out with its first word in resolving the issue will finally put in place a transition supply contract between National Power Corp. and Manila Electric Co.

ERC Chair Rodolfo Albano Jr. said the ongoing deliberations will finally take on the merits after Meralco and Napocor, together with the state-run Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM), failed to reach an agreement on their own.

"Maybe unlimited thrashes to set jurisdiction, so we'll decide now," he said. "But this decision will not only avert Meralco but also the other power distribution Luzon."

Albano is not to be surprised ERC resolution aims to restore Luzon power users of stable and affordable power amid sweeping electricity environment.

"The common denominator [for Metro-second the other Luzon distribution utilities] is the objective of bringing the lowest rates to consumers. The transition will eventually benefit end users," Albano said.

Meralco's top president and utility executive head Ramon dela Peña had earlier said that end-September 2006 is the deadline for "securing the contracts" for all parties involved in the TSC negotiations.

However, PSALM and Meralco representatives actually agreed to the ERC in late September to extend the deadline for the negotiations.

The issue stems that Meralco, Napocor and PSALM were trying to iron out their bid to unbundle

Delayed ₱18.6-B refund to Meralco clients starts

MAKE WAY FOR THE WANDERER Oliver Castillo, display his "Spider-Bot repertoire," which reportedly incorporates gundam mileage of rebates as an exhibition of inventions in Manila. The repertoire is one of the many items displayed at the exhibition. — rr

By Abigail L. Ho

AFTER MONTHS OF WAITING, CUSTOMERS covered by the fourth and last phase of the Manila Electric Co.'s, P39-billion refund scheme would soon be able to avail themselves of their rebates, beginning with those having electric non-government accounts.

Meralco vice president and refund management task force head Jesewelo Mabulo told the business that the distribution utility had already sent out letters notifying the requirements for availing of the refund to its first batch of clients.

Some customers which had received their letters and completed all the documentary requirements had already started submitting them to various Meralco branches nationwide, he added.

Since the amounts due to customers under the extra Phase 4 are significantly larger than those paid out under the first three phases, he said it is important that refund claimants have all the proper documents in place to prevent refunds to be wrong entities.

Meralco will pay out P18.6 billion worth of rebates to the entire refund phase.

The first tranche of the refund scheme's Phase 4—or Phase 4a—includes small commercial and industrial customers, as well as operators of the streetlights, including government hospitals and metered streetlights with contracted demand lower than 46 kilowatts.

An Energy Regulatory Commission order issued in July, however, also placed all government accounts under this tranche, making an refund outlays to P1.33 billion from P2.2 billion.

Despite this, Mabulo said Meralco had not yet started issuing refund letters to the government accounts as the Bureau of Internal Revenue has yet to give the distribution utility the list of accounts entitled to rebates.

"The list of government accounts is still with the BIR for verification. We will write government accounts as soon as the BIR gives us the list back," he explained.

GSIS should stay out of CTPL business

GSIS WANTS TO MONOPOLIZE the CTPL [Compulsory Third Party Liability] business and compulsorily cover out the entire private insurance industry. Have you heard of anything more preposterous?

In an Aug. 26 letter to Investment Leandro Mendoza of the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC), GSIS president Winston Garcia offered to cover all vehicles nationwide against CTPL insurance. The offer is based on Presidential Decree No. 245 issued in 1973, empowering GSIS to issue practically any kind of insurance.

There are three reasons why the GSIS offer should be shot down before it gets off the ground.

First, we are no longer under martial law. Free enterprise, trade liberalization and globalization are put-backed in many countries, are the rules of the day. Granting a monopoly is always bad for the consumers. A monopoly always leads to high prices and shoddy service.

Second, Mendoza does not have the authority to require all vehicle owners nationwide to buy their CTPL insurance only from GSIS. The CTPL law is in the insurance code, and only in the insurance code. The insurance commissioner is the only government agency empowered to implement the code.

By law, the insurance commission furnishes the DTO with a list of insurance companies authorized to issue CTPL insurance as evidence of COC. When the motorist registers his vehicle, he presents his COC. The job of the LTO is merely to check that the insurance company is on the list.

Instead, the LTO checks that the insurance company is "accredited" by DTO to effect LTO colleagues on the powers of the insurance commission.

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Ifluencio C. Gemorian

The DTO, and even the DOTC, does not have the authority to "accredit" any insurance company, including GSIS. The roles of the LTO requiring an insurance company to qualify for accreditation before its COCs can be accepted are a humiliation of the insurance code.

The license or certificate of authority (COA) issued by the insurance commissioner to an insurance company should be acceptable as such to any government agency, particularly the LTO.

Third, and this is the most important point, the GSIS plan is for authorized safety to issue COCs to all vehicles nationwide to a blatant infringement on the vehicle owner's basic and fundamental right to enter into contracts.

Nobody knew of all the LTO and DOTC with its monetary interest in the insurance contract, should tell me where I should buy the policy on my car. It's my car and my liability, and I pay the premium with my own money. I should have the complete freedom of choice of insurance agent or broker. Besides, who wants to invest with GSIS anyway?

The problem of fake COCs, which in the way is grossly overapproved, can be solved without converting GSIS into a monstrous monopoly or infringing on a citizen's basic and fundamental rights. We should not solve a problem by creating an even bigger problem.

That's three strikes on GSIS. GSIS is out.

Commercial demand boosts coco industry

By Christine S. Gutierrez

INDUSTRY PROSPECTS ARE OPtimistic for Philippine coconut products and millers as local industrialists expand operations and a new biodiesel plant comes on stream next year.

In fact, both the Philippine Coconut Oil Producers Association Inc. (PCOPA) and the United Coconut Associations of the Philippines Inc. (UCAP) are bullish that higher local demand will boost the industry's growth in 2006.

"Leading shampoo and soap manufacturers Philippine Kao Corp. plans to expand their monthly operating capacity from the current 40,000 metric tons to 100,000 metric tons next year," PCOPA president Raul Dizon told the business. "The mill is bonded for us."

Apart from its nutritional value, coconut oil is a leading ingredient used to manufacture bath soap, shampoo and detergents.

Another development in 2006, according to Dizon, would be the commercial production of the first methyl ester plant of Chemrez Inc. manufacturing coconut-based biodiesel.

In terms of coconut oil exports, the country's participation in the Trade Liberalization Program mills (Dec. 31 will also help well for the country's producers because it has a geographical advantage over competitor Indonesia.

"We hope that the tariffs slapped by Chinese authorities on our exports will be reduced to zero from the current 10 percent," he added.

He noted that forthcoming higher demand will be met with the expected good coconut oil production levels aided by good weather in the third and fourth quarters of this year.

Dizon said the coconut industry is bouncing back in the second semester having on the exported close to 1.2 million metric tons of coconut oil to the world market, and already exceeding the target of shipping 950,000 metric tons by year-end.

This is 16 percent higher compared to 2004 export when the country shipped 952,000 metric tons of coconut oil to traditional markets like the US and European Union.

Local production

The country's revenue of industry has been bounded by production declines since the Philippine Coconut Authority has no budget to implement the fertilization project it had planned for the next two years.

According to data from PCA, production may double to 4 million metric tons of copra—almost double from last year's output—if the fertilization program is pursued.

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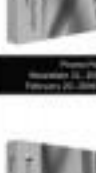

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ERC to decide on power supply . . .

the equivalent of the contract a year after the declaration of retail competition and open access.

But, having missed the supposed "working deadline", the ERC would now stay to clarify the parties' stance at a resolution.

Under RA 9136 or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 (EPIRA), Napocor has to negotiate a TSC with each of its power distribution customers in preparation for retail competition and open access to the distribution service.

Among those that have already signed TSCs with Napocor and PHAMI were the Aboitiz/Meralco Electric Co. and Davao Light and Power Co., as well as Cagayan de Oro Power and Light Co.

Napocor president Cyril Del Callar had earlier committed that all ongoing negotiations for TSCs and other bilateral contracts with its distribution customers would be concluded by October. Similar negotiations with the nine firms industrial customers should be completed by December.

As of September, Napocor documents showed that the more than had 70 distribution customers with supplemental agreements that had to be converted to TSCs. As of Sept. 9, only 21 of these had been filed with the ERC, while the other 50 were still under negotiation.

The state firm also has 46 utility customers awaiting new TSCs. Of these, only 13 have been signed and filed before the ERC, while 33 are still being negotiated.

P54-P55 TO $1

Peso seen improving in 2006

By Michelle K. Borna

GUINIGUNDO

THE BIGGEST NEUTRAL IN: Filipinos has improved to outlook on the peso's movement next year, improving the local currency to average between 54 and 55 to a US dollar, due to an improving fiscal picture.

The 2005 earlier said the peso would settle at between 55 and 57 to a US dollar in 2006.

BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo told reporters that the recent gains in the peso, which the Arroyo administration attributed to the implementation of the bill Reform, the last Nov. 1, would still be reflected on the peso next year.

The BSP's forecast on the peso was more conservative compared with that of some market analysts.

Investment bank ING is bullish on the peso, expecting it to appreciate to a US dollar next year.

The last time the peso hit the 53 level was in May 2005.

UBS said its forecast had to do partly with the implementation of the new VAT law, seen by some financial market players to an effective tool to solve the government's budget woes.

Increasing remittances from overseas Filipino workers would also boost the local currency, it added.

The new VAT law expanded the coverage of the tax to include oil and electricity, among others, and will raise the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent in February next year.

The government expects to raise an additional P77.6 billion a year in revenues from the VAT law, starting next year.

An improvement in the government's fiscal position encourages foreign investment to flows because it reflects the capability of the government to pay its debts and spread for securities.

An increase in foreign currency inflows strengthens a local currency.

With projections that the peso would be stronger than expected, the BSP said average inflation for next year would come in below the forecast of 6 to 5 percent.

The BSP affirmed said rising prices due to the increase in the VAT rate next year would likely be offset by the improved performance of the peso.

The two percentage point hike in the VAT rate was estimated to increase inflation by 2.5 percentage points.

While the stronger peso would ease inflation, it however posts a threat on the already weak income performance of the export sector.

A stronger peso means Philippine exports would become more expensive for foreigners.

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Friday, Nov. 18, 2005
Philippine Dealing & Exchange Corp. (PDEx)
(as of 4:30 p.m.)

Term	Today	Change from previous day	Change from previous week	Change from previous month
1M	5.2100	0.00	-0.03	-0.10
2M	5.2100	0.00	-0.03	-0.07
3M	5.2100	0.00	-0.03	-0.03
4M	5.2100	0.00	-0.03	-0.03
5M	5.2100	0.00	-0.03	-0.03
6M	5.2100	0.00	-0.03	-0.03
7M	5.2100	0.00	-0.03	-0.03
8M	5.2100	0.00	-0.03	-0.03
9M	5.2100	0.00	-0.03	-0.03
10M	5.2100	0.00	-0.03	-0.03
11M	5.2100	0.00	-0.03	-0.03
1Y	5.2100	-0.01	-0.03	-0.03
2Y	5.2100	-0.01	-0.03	-0.03
3Y	5.2100	-0.01	-0.03	-0.03
4Y	5.2100	-0.01	-0.03	-0.03
5Y	5.2100	-0.01	-0.03	-0.03

FOREIGN TRADES TO SETTLE

Instrument	Volume (in million PHP)
FXTBs	3,972.9
TBILLs	50.0
FXBs	650.0
TOTAL	3,200.9

NOTE: PDEx Benchmarks are calculated from the weighted average yields of client transactions, bank indications, or bank bid rates as the case may be for 12 tenors at 4:30pm daily. The PDEx Benchmarks may be used to determine interest rate basis for loans, deposits and other financial instruments that have variable rates.

Stocks to rise on falling crude

By Elizabeth L. Sánchez

SHARE PRICES ARE EXPECTED TO BE buoyed this week by the drop in world oil prices and brisk buying by foreign investors, analysts said.

Oil firms have cut fuel prices during the weekend by $3 centavos a liter with the softening of world oil prices. Data from the Department of Energy showed that regional benchmark Dubai crude dropped to a November average of $52.41 a barrel from $53.56 last month.

AB Capital Securities wrote in a weekly report that stocks were expected to bounce back this week, after registering its heaviest loss for the month in the market neared the end of the year.

"The market has shown resilience, having rebound modestly despite the shortage of headlines this week," AB Capital Securities said.

"The market is finding some comfort in the declining price of crude oil, which was earlier feared to reach $90 a barrel," AB Capital Securities said.

Investment Funds	Net Asset Value Per Unit (NAVPU) as of Nov. 15, 2005	as of Nov. 17, 2005
Philequity Dollar Bond Fund	US$ 1.0487	US$ 1.0720
Philequity Dollar Bond Fund	US$ 1.0149	US$ 1.0285

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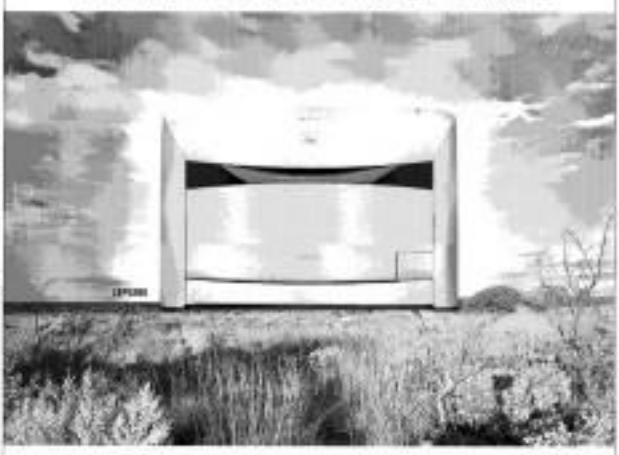

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CAPT

BUSINESS

'06 economy growth seen to be modest

RP says '06 GDP growth may hit 6.3%, but IIF conservatively pegs it at 4.9%

By Michelle V Remo

GROWTH OF THE Philippine economy is expected to remain modest until 2006, as the government is expected to take on the twin tasks of fixing its budget woes and curbing inflation through tight monetary policy.

This was the projection made by the Institute of International Finance Inc. (IIF), an association of financial institutions worldwide. IIF said the country's gross domestic product (GDP) growth would stand at only 4.9 percent next year.

The government's economic team has set a GDP growth goal of 5.7 to 6.3 percent in 2006, while the original target under the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) was set at 6.3 to 7.3 percent.

"Rising energy prices, renewed weakness in agriculture and sluggish exports are poised to slow real GDP from the 15-year high of 6.1 percent in 2004. . ," IIF said in its assessment paper on the Philippine economy dated Nov. 11.

It noted that the slowdown has begun this year, when it sees GDP to hit a full-year average of only 4.8 percent.

IIF estimated that the country's exports would growth only between 3 and 5 percent in 2006, thus staying near the expected 4-percent growth for 2005. The projected export growth figures for this year and the next reflect a slowdown from the 9 percent growth registered in 2004.

"The government's effort to contain the budget deficit and the external bank's tightening bias are also potential weights on growth," the group added.

Efforts to lower the budget deficit usually entail reducing government spending which, on the contrary, has to be increased if authorities want to pump-prime the economy using fiscal policy.

Tightening of monetary policy, such as through raising interest rates, discourages investment, which are also no inspiration for the economy to grow.

Real GDP by Expenditure

	2004	2005	2006	2007
Real GDP	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Domestic demand	5.9	5.3	4.2	4.3
Private consumption	5.2	5.0	3.5	4.7
Government consumption	0.5	0.0	3.5	3.5
Gross fixed investment	2.1	0.2	3.5	3.5
Change in inventories*	0.5	1.1	0.4	0.2
Change in foreign balance*	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0

*CONTRIBUTION TO GROWTH OF GDP

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas this year has twice raised its key interest rates to 7.5 percent for overnight borrowing, and 9.75 percent for overnight lending, as it aimed to curb unexpected acceleration of inflation.

Higher interest rates reduce demand for loans and, therefore, limit money in circulation and investments.

IIF however, said rising inflows from remittances from overseas Filipino workers would be a growth contributor and would temper the slowdown in the economy. OFW remittances would likewise help keep the country's dollar holdings stable.

The group also identified the expected increase in tourist arrivals and the continued expansion of the call center industry as factors that would cushion the adverse effects of tight fiscal and monetary policy on the economy's performance.

IIF said that the unstable political environment remains a concern for investors. It is also the reason why the Philippine economy has been growing much less than it should be.

"Allegations of vote rigging and illicit activities (on the part of close family members of President Macapagal-Arroyo) are stark reminders of the poor state of public governance that has plagued domestic political conditions and hampered economic development over the past several years," the group said.

Workers' exodus boosts dollar inflows

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS SEES the country's balance of payments (BOP) surplus to surpass its target as it sees above $1 billion in inflows by yearend due to increased remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

The revised BOP surplus forecast is higher than the $800 million program originally set by the central bank for 2005.

OFW remittances is one of the factors affecting the BOP position, which is a summary of a country's transactions with the rest of the world. A surplus in the BOP means a country had more foreign currency inflows than outflows, while a deficit shows the opposite. A country's BOP position is one of the key factors affecting a local currency's performance vis-a-vis other currencies.

According to a BSP official who asked not to be named, year-on-year growth in OFW remittances will likely hit 20 percent by end-2005, or double the 10-percent growth programmed for the year. The higher forecast for OFW remittances was made following strong inflows posted last October, when remittances grew by 28 percent to $1.9 billion compared with the levels recorded in same month last year.

Other factors affecting the BOP position are net exports, net portfolio and equity investments, foreign exchange interest, and other financial transfers.

While the expected BOP surplus of at least $1 billion would be better than target, it would also be lower than the $2.3 billion already recorded as of the first 10 months of the year. This means the country is expected to post BOP deficits in the two remaining months of the year, with the need to pay off maturing foreign obligations.

According to a BSP official, the increasing deployment of Filipinos abroad reflects the fact that the country has insufficient employment opportunities for its labor force.

Michelle V. Remo

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In Mindanao, job loss marks uncertainty

Rising costs of fuel, labor threaten jobs of over 26,000 factory workers

By Roscel P. Domingo

RISING COSTS OF FUEL AND LABOR as well as aging equipment have pushed several fishing and canning firms in Mindanao to start laying off workers and reduce work days, according to a government report.

Based on the minutes of a consultative meeting between top government officials and industry players held in Zamboanga City earlier this month, most of the 35 fishing companies and 9 canning firms are finding it hard to sustain their operations.

During the meeting, which Mindanao Economic Development Council chair Jesus Dureza attended, the firms complained of weakening competitiveness due to aging facilities and equipment, and the high cost of government regulations and fees enforced by their trade.

The firms said factors that increase the cost of doing business include: high prices of fishing boat spare parts; too many licenses to maintain on board; radio systems; the hassle of filing separate identification papers for the Maritime Industry Authority and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources; and, excessive inland survey fees.

According to the Department of Labor and Employment, there are at least 26,000 workers in the region who are engaged in the fishing and canning industry.

Of the total, 13,000 are in Zamboanga area, 10,000 in canning factories, and another 3,000 in its encasing industry.

But the DOLE said only 6,000, or less than a quarter of the total, were in danger of losing their livelihood after a number of fishing firms and canneries earlier notified the government of their plan to temporarily close shop.

During the meeting, representatives from DFSE Marina, BMB and the department of energy and of agriculture said they study the manner to address the industries' problems.

As of June '05, Mega Fishing Corp., which employs 800 workers, was poised to let go of 240 workers and implement a rotational working scheme that would affect one out of five employees.

By Dec. 1, GET Fishing Enterprises will halve its labor force to 250 workers. ASH Trade and Industrial Co., with over 200 workers, may also shut down.

Other firms that are expected to close shop or lay off workers are: Zamboanga Universal Fishing Corp., DLC Fishing Corp., Moly Fishing Enterprises, Ayala Seafood Corp., Universal Canning Inc., and Pioneer Producers and Exporters Corp.

Tri-nation oil and gas survey in Spratly Islands completed

MANILA, MONDAY — THE INITIAL phase of a pioneering Spratly Islands survey yielded "good data" that may show whether the area has commercial energy reserves similar to those of the Malampaya oil and gas fields, according to officials.

PNOC Exploration Corp., China National Offshore Oil Corp. and Vietnam Oil and Gas Corp. [PetroVietnam] held a preliminary brief to mark the completion of the data gathering under a Joint Marine Seismic Undertaking past that was signed last March.

The survey was done to the part of the Spratly Island group that is being claimed by the Philippines, China and Vietnam.

Eduardo V. Manalac, PNOC-EC president and chief executive, said the survey covered about 143,000 square kilometers that yielded some 11,000 kilometers-lines of two-dimensional images.

M/V San Pat 502, a vessel owned by CITIC subsidiary China United Investor Ltd., conducted the survey from starting in early September with parts that were, on the average, five nautical miles apart.

The vessel docked here for scheduled refueling and maintenance repairs before sailing out of the country.

"We [collected] good data which means the images are of [relatively] fair quality," Manalac said. "The next step would be to process the data, which we agreed to do in Hanoi, Vietnam."

The PNOC-EC chief said processing the data would take until January or early February.

The data would allow for one to identify for interpretation that would take down to five months.

"We would have the results by the middle of 2006, just a little over a year after we signed this landmark cooperation agreement," he said.

Manalac said the area that was surveyed was as attractive as the Camago-Malampaya area at the pre-exploration stage. Subsequent drillings and development proved that Malampaya could yield about 2.7 trillion cubic meters of gas and 85 million barrels of crude oil.

The main difference, however, is that the Spratly fields are in deeper waters, between 200 meters and 3 kilometers, and are farther offshore, Manalac said.

ATR-Kim Eng tapped as MMC adviser

By Clarissa S. Barlow

MAKATI MEDICAL CENTER HAS ASKED ATR Kim-Eng for advice on how to ease its debt load and raise revenue ongoing income stream flow and finance a new hospital building, its top official said.

MMC president Isidro Mendoza said in an interview that the financial group would present its recommendations to the MMC board by the end of the month.

"They can recommend anything including a public listing," said Mendoza. "But the priority has to be to reduce debts and to get new equity."

ATR Kim-Eng, he said, had also been talking with the hospital's creditors on how to restructure the debts.

The ailing hospital entered the banks to extend the maturity of about P1.2 billion in debts to about 30 years from the current six years.

It has P200 million in obligations to the Development Bank of the Philippines and also has loans with Rizal Commercial Banking Corp., the Land Bank of the Philippines, Security Bank and the Social Security System.

The hospital had also another P600 million in non-bank obligations.

Banks normally require borrowers to maintain a one-to-one relationship between current assets to current liabilities.

But due to financial difficulties, the hospital has 91 in liabilities for every peso of hospital assets.

"We have stopped hemorrhaging in some places, but we have not completely stopped the bleeding," said Mendoza.

Mendoza also said at least seven investors have offered to put in money into the hospital, including its chair Manuel V. Pangilinan.

Once the country's premier hospital, MMC sustained P600 million in losses from 2002 to 2004.

About a third of the hospital is controlled by the Ayala and Ayalaista families, while a fourth is held by the heirs of other founders.

Globe sees reason for optimism

GRAVE CONCERN FOR THE BOTTOM LINE has given way to rosy prospects as Globe Telecom Inc. notes the calming effect the passage of the expanded value-added tax had on the economy.

Gerardo Ablaza, Globe president, said that investors have become "bullish on the Philippines as economic indicators improve.

"There is ground for optimism now," he said. "The exchange rate has improved and interest rates are holding."

In April, Ablaza said higher rates and rising inflation could force consumers to spread less on telco services.

But as of Friday, strong dollar resistance brought the peso at 54.39 to a dollar. Rates, which have huge dollar debts, can expect to save up as interest payments every time the peso improves against the greenback.

Steadily and relatively modest interest rates are making it attractive for companies like Globe to borrow in pesos.

Corporations were reporting higher earnings, according to Ablaza. Fuel rises, which have been driving up prices of all products, have also been easing. Prices of petroleum products have dropped four times in less than two months.

"The implementation of the VAT is key as it tackles the single biggest concern of investors, which is the deficit," Ablaza said.

Still, telcos are wary that consumers now have less money to spend because of increased prices.

Manuel Pangilinan, chair of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. had said that the "halcyon days of double-digit growth" for telcos, especially PLDT and Smart Communications Inc., were over.

Clarissa S. Barlow

No free lunch

From page B4

stable politics are driving the directional path of the stock market, in most contemporary analysts would have you believe? Think again. Market movements in Jordan and France belie this, because by anxiety. The recent declaration of martial law by King Abdullah of Jordan hasn't taken the steam out of personalities' flows into that country. Their stock market share actually shows continued upward movement. And look at France, where violent unrest has been raging for weeks, and has left more than 5,000 cars burned and prompted the declaration of a state of emergency and a ban on public meetings. And yet that country's stock market index was up 0.84 percent last week, following the previous week's rising 2.98 percent rebound!

What all this is telling us is that we, and in particular Malacañang, should stop reading too much into the politics, market movements of late. That is all driven by Globe but money that can just as easily leave as overnight, and in the case of the currency market, by the usual Christmas season surge in OFW remittances.

Enough of the unwarranted gloating, please.

Comments are welcome at chabita@inquirer.net

LIFESTYLE

Lito Chulo Bacal-Fortunato
Lifestyle Editor Lito B. Zulueta

MONDAY ARTS & BOOKS • TUESDAY FITNESS • WEDNESDAY IBU • THURSDAY FOOD • FRIDAY FASHION & BEAUTY

"ILUMINATION"

Our nation's follies captured in ethnic furies

By Gina Dorronsoro
Lifestyle Editor

BORN AND RAISED IN Baguio, of Ibaloi heritage, Leonard Agnasoldo has continually explored ethnic identity and the indigenous world in his works.

In past shows, he probed the borders of mixed media, particularly the use of hand-colored carved rubber, an exotic canvas on which to configure his personal insights on history, religion and reality vis-à-vis his beloved life.

The Amon Ini Awards grand prize winner for 2005, Agnasoldo has lately surveyed the national scene, emerging with critical views of the body politic, the power shades from the various sectors—political, religious and economic—and their henchmen and minions.

The shift in the artist's evolution is the result of his continuous probe into the strange admixture of religious sensibility in this country inhabited by various ethno-linguistic groups, a people that continue to crowd in their image in the only Christian country this side of the world.

The exhibit is titled "Ay Apo!"

(TURN TO PAGE E-11)

"PROLYTE"

He depicts a people moving closer to salvation, or perdition

"RICHNESS Revealed"

Cheers for Sansó

By Jack Tarzan
Contributor

ON OCT. 9, SANSÓ'S 20" X 36" work "Celestial" (happened was booked-on hitting the 20th anniversary auction of Southeast Asian art at Sotheby's in Singapore. There was toughest bidding and the work sailed at double the original estimate.

To celebrate the sale and pay tribute to the artist, Galerie Joaquin will hold a show of Sansó's works, "Fabulosa," on Nov. 26 at the Main Activity Center, 3/F The Podium.

Modesty has always been one of Sansó's most endearing qualities. An artist who grew up in the Philippines, he has become an internationally renowned artist whose works are in the top museums in the world.

He also holds the distinction of being an Ateneo de Manila University graduate who has been honored by the Ateneo Art Gallery.

His artworks are represented in the collections of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Art Institute of Chicago, Cleveland Museum of Art, San Francisco Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Museums of Modern Art, Metropolitan Museum of New York, Museo d'Art Moderne in Paris, Rockefeller National Gallery of Washington, art collection of the City of Paris, Royal Academy of Madrid and the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

His collectors include the Rothschild family, Barbara Rockefeller, Viscount Pilar, Baron Schlagenhaft, Juan Carmona, Prince Mikasa of Greece, Princess Diadem of Thailand, Joseph Kanon Jr. and the Sultanate family of Indonesia.

Awards and distinctions were many as found, whose family moved to Manila from Cebu during World War II. He studied at the UP's School of Fine Arts and the University of Santo Tomas.

In 1952, he was the grand prize for both oil and watercolor in the Art Association of the Philippines exhibits.

Recently he was chosen among 11 artists from the Philippines whose works were featured in the 30th anniversary auction of Southeast Asian art by Sotheby's. The other artists were National Artists Fernando Amorsolo, H.R. Ocampo, Vicente Manansala and Anton Luna, Botong Francisco, and the Old Masters Hidalgo, Juan Luna and Fabian de la Rosa.

Despite the achievements, Sansó remains self-deprecating.

"Lucky to be good with my color but not always," he said, in an interview in the open field usually visited by the famous Filipino artists.

Although he has now decided to come home permanently to the Philippines, Sansó says his way to Bali helped him pursue his unique perspective.

"If Bali helped, Hong Kong was very modern. Many of the best museums in the world are just a corner or a bus ride away, like one in Cannes, a Monet, a Matisse, a Picasso—just seeing all these great masters and really see you discover more."

In Bali, Sansó would start working at 7 a.m.

"When I work, I work like a horse," he said, working possibly 10 to 12 hour workdays in Bali.

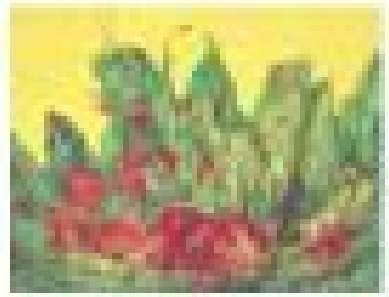
He usually worked long hours during summer, when there was longer available light, or could be seen in the fishing open and his eyes adjust from the sunset.

During winter, it would become difficult to work by mid-afternoon as there was less light, so he would usually take dinner or drinking.

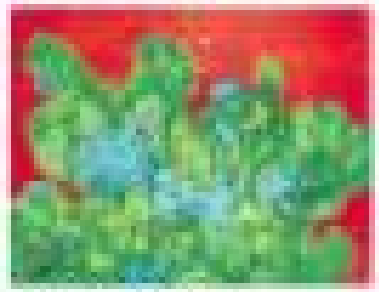
At a dinner in the fashionable and stylish artistic area, his admirers and friends have donated to pay together a dozen of their favorite Sansó works.

"Fabulosa" will feature 40 works of the artist, who turns 70 this Nov. 26. Sansó's other works will come from collectors while the rest will come from Galerie Joaquin's collection.

There will be a preview of the works on Nov. 24. Call 7220033, 7206618 or 8167004. Visit www.galeriejoaquin.com.



"RADIANCE at Morning"



"BOUNDLESS Energies"

4 artists celebrate life in 'Circle of Life'

"GOLDEN Harvest," Michael P. Blanco

"THE 'CIRCLE OF LIFE' IS AN EXHIBIT OF four artists, three from Angeles and one from Bacolod.

The coming out of colors, of dark and heavy backgrounds before the release and sharply [illegible] western Metropolitan the works of Dela Asuncion.

The rich and sun-drenched tropical colors of San Fernando depict the Filipino family in their homes and in their environment where they hold their regardless.

The romantic realism of Michael Blanco is a trademark of the Blanco family art movement. The subjects seem to leap out of the canvas, showcasing the spirit of the hard-working and resilient Filipino family. Michael is the son of the Angeles master, Joel Blanco.

"The realist-impressionistic style of Mildred Dizon children has added a wide charm and the pastel flowers and scenes that away to the brown, dappled moss and flowers, and warm tones.

"Circle of Life" opens tonight at the Philamlife Gallery, Ground Floor, Ayala Avenue, Makati, Metro Manila. It will run for 11 days.

MICHAEL Blanco, Delia Asuncion, Joel Figueroa and Mildred Dizon

Romeo Forbes in watercolor and graphite

"OUT for a Walk"

"GREEN Concert"

DANCE EXPRESSION GALLERY presents a collection of watercolors by Romeo Forbes.

Forbes, whose works in oil and acrylic have gained a big following, offers yet another aspect of his talents in his new works. He now creates watercolors with graphite.

Not many people know that Forbes is a watercolor wizard, having won the prized prize in watercolor at the Texas and Gulf Coast events.

The new series has Forbes mellowing his colors, complementing the flow of his medium. The inclusion of graphite lends a magical aura to some of his soft compositions, lending a mystical characteristic to the pieces, particularly those that have his signature watercolored style.

Dance Expression Art is now home to 2-D Dolls Consultation Mfg., 111 Jupiter St., Bel Air, Md. (410) 893-7700 or www.2-D.com.

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"LOTUS Pond," by Aileen Lanuza

"MIDNIGHT Lagoon," by Reynaldo Aviola

"POND Range," by Eileen Serrano

From landscape into void

By Constantino C. Tejero

SUBMISSION THAT ART is becoming in the country is robust the works of local artists spill out of the art galleries. But when unsupervised any harder proof when these artists start holding exhibits in commercial and museum parks?

Astonished art lovers recently witnessed such a phenomenon with the opening of the exhibit "Images of Tranquility," 57 pieces in various media (oil or acrylic on canvas, pastel on velour, watercolors, charcoal, pen and ink on paper), presented by Cadence Joaquin until Nov. 26 at The Heritage Park on Bayleaf Road, Fort Bonifacio Global City, Taguig.

Sometime earlier, the 25-member Cadence Group of Artists was invited by Renaissance Art of Management to mount the open painting session in the park. With tranquility in theme, they were asked to paint the landscaping, structures and whatever they saw in the serene project.

However, some participants in the session, and others they came up with on their own, exhibited. The result is an extremely varied lot.

Here Zoe saw 6 Makiwa at L. the figurative bedazzles with the non-representational, brilliant hues merge with informative monochrome, and landscape jostles with still life for available space on the walls.

The view of the park is a connoisseur's delight. Here are the stuff of Oriental art: koi, lagoon, garden, bridge, dream, lotus, gazebo, rocks, orchids, trees, river canal, fountain, pond.

The artists' individual styles range from realistic to graphic to impressionistic to modernistic, their techniques varying from watercolor to impasto.

Such high contrasts of styles and techniques can be clearly appreciated as pieces on the same subjects, such as Aileen Lanuza's and Bernard Hart's rendering of a lotus pond, or the various versions of a giant dove's nest bridge, the lagoon at night or day.

Among the more notable are Lanuza's gigantic blooms in Lotus Pond" and "Lotus Bud Flowers", Aileen Lanuza's Chinese painting rendering of landscape, Pamela Villanueva's naked piece in blue and green, "Misty Morning."

An intriguing piece is Leonardo Reyes' "Three Fishes." This is simply a top down of a school of koi struggling in the water, framed in white color frame in watercolor on paper.

Most other works are very lowers, as they look like a cluster of red, orange and yellow flowers. It is a joyous piece. Zoe likes in its vivacity and delight, as the opening of the mind and the expansion of vision.

In a series in oil on canvas—"Metaphors," "Transition" and "Tranquility"—Glen Tomeo limns in wonders of values, gray and chiaroscuro rendered with colors and outline sketchy figures seeming lost in expanse of blankness. Paralleling this passage from figuration to abstraction is the view of landscape architecture becoming a void.

Here, step by gradual step, one is appreciating the final destination, where one attains greater peace, true tranquility, repose. This is, of course, Zen.

"PERFECT Circle [In My Dreams II]," by Edwin Tiro Reyes

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Ademis and Aurelio at Renaissance, Cruz at InterCon, young women artists at Joaquin

VISUAL ARTS

"REALITY Hides Within," by Roy Aviado

THE RENAISSANCE Gallery presents Ely Ademis and Pat Aurelio in "Black 2 Black" (under 21 Dec.). Both artists are members of the Arts Pictura group and paint big-sized works of the Arts Pictura painting workshop held weekly in the group's gallery on Buendia.

Ademis experiments with the effects of light on various subjects with astounding results. A master of techniques and materials, he has been painting for the past 25 years.

Aurelio uses many hues for visual effects in his subjects and paints with passionate strokes. A former Fine Arts student of Philippine Women University and finalist in various art competitions, he chose to depict his representational artworks using mixed media. (LM ESTEVE)

DELANO S. Cruz, artist and proprietor of Bamboo, will exhibit his 18th one-man show at Hotel InterContinental Makati City, on Dec. 20, 6 p.m.–9:30 p.m., with the theme "Mystic Nature." Twenty-six artistic expressions by Bamboo, Andy Boy, Tom Mendoza, Boy Dee, Ed Agustin, Perfecto Ed Mendoza, and Marlo P. Sison, president of ASC Records, outdoor advertising.

HELENE Joaquin features three young exhibitors "Painted Sky." Ely Dollente takes on the persona and to create intricate patterns over layers and layers of colors. Mia Yrosa paints realistic subjects in impasto strokes of oil paint, creating patterns that are strikingly dramatic in appeal. Ann Ocampo uses Chinese ink on rice paper as the basis for her postcards, making them larger than life by capturing their individual personalities, pursuing the concept of portraiture to another level.

Valencia and Wallace students of Marcelo Rubinos. Gallery 5 is located at Upper Bonifacio Street open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Gallery Joaquin, 2F 5 P. Guevarra St. and Rizal cor. Lane, Addition Hills, San Juan. Many Mayda. It runs until Dec. 9.

FINELINE Gallery presents "Escapes," a one-man exhibit of Richard Cruz, Nov. 29–Dec. 2, Del Casal, a lecture for his beautiful interpretations of religious iconography. For this latest exhibit, he took inspiration from real statues of the Virgin Mary and angels. Finale Art Gallery is at 47, G. Del Rosario St., Mandaluyong City. Call 5320451.

ELMER Barbosque presents his latest oil paintings in "Impulse," Nov. 30–Dec. 3, in Boston Gallery, 113 Boston cor. Lanuza Sts., Cubao, Quezon City. The works feature street characters in unusual, random poses.

THE ALCOVE PHOTO GALLERY presents Charlie Villanueva's "Reflections 05," his third solo exhibition. Nov. 16–Dec. 15. Focusing on landscapes, the show recaptures the traditional manual way of darkroom printing. The Alcove Gallery is at the Ayala Museum Library, Makati Avenue cor. Ayala Triangle, Makati City. Call 8921601.

ART Informed offers workshops in the fundamentals of painting, drawing, pottery and sculpture. Art Informed is at 277 Esteban St., Greenhills East, Mandaluyong. Call 7250845.

"DUNGAN," by Roy Aviado

SOLANO CRUZ